

75/10

THE
GREEK THEATRE
OF
FATHER BRUMOY.

TRANSLATED

By Mrs. CHARLOTTE LENNOX.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

L O N D O N :

Printed for Mess. MILLAR, VAILLANT, BALDWIN, CROWDER,
JOHNSTON, DODSLEY, and WILSON and DURHAM.

MDCCLIX.

GREEK THEATRE



Advertisement

I have the pleasure to announce that the
Grecian Theatre, in the Strand, will be
of the kind of the Theatre, and the
by a young person, who has been
and improve the Theatre, and the
by the Theatre, and the Theatre.

author of the Theatre, and the Theatre.

THEATRE, and the Theatre.

THEATRE, and the Theatre.

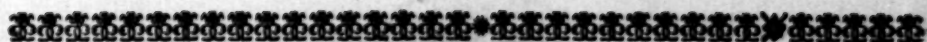
THEATRE, and the Theatre.

THEATRE, and the Theatre.

THEATRE, and the Theatre.

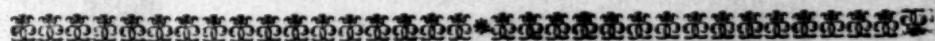
THEATRE, and the Theatre.

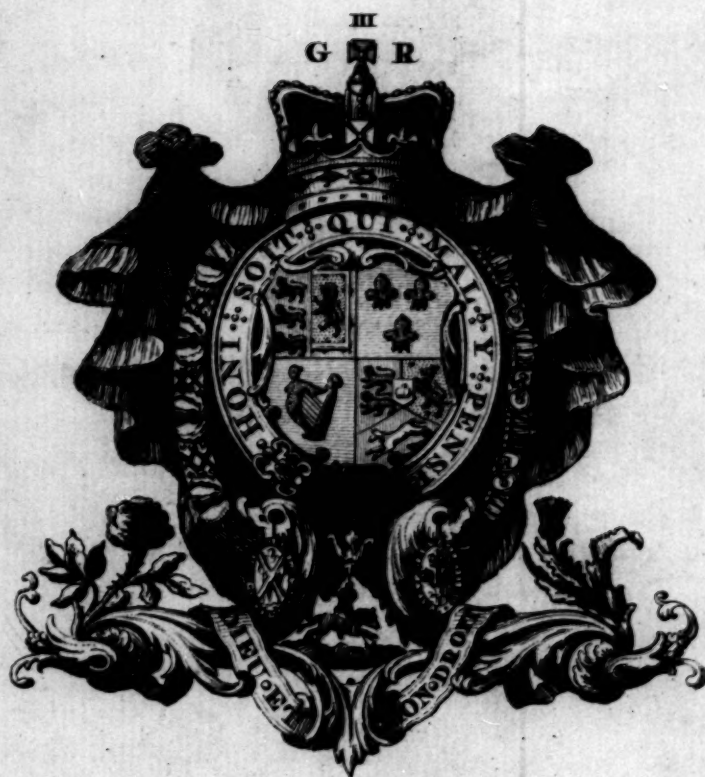
THEATRE, and the Theatre.



Advertisement.

IN this volume the discourse on the Greek comedy, and the General Conclusion are translated by the celebrated author of the Rambler. The comedy of the Birds, and that of Peace, by a young gentleman. The comedy of the Frogs, by the learned and ingenious Dr. Gregory Sharpe, ~~and~~ The discourse upon the Cyclops, by John Bourryau *Esq.* The Cyclops, by Dr. Grainger, author of the translation of Tibullus.





Thy Maxims are applauded good Hyde
in an Old Courtier never confide
where Promise & performance run
like Parallel lines - never meet in the.

The Post Philistines all Happiness find
in Health, Wealth, & Pleasure & quietude of Debt.

Ancient Comedy a busy world wth Torches

Modern ∂ = a pleasing innocent mirror
of Human life

Menander is a good deal more
whence Aristotle, takes form of Shew

where a pleasing portrait draws
of civil life will gain applause
If then Menander is true Polite
who'd wish like Aristotle to write

The Genius of Independency naturally
produces a kind of Saliv mawkishness of delicate
as may be easily observed in most of the
inhabitants of Island.

Longinus remarks that

A Popular Government hides Eloquence
& that a despotic Monarchy stifles it.

a Disposition is always a delicious treat
to human Malignity.
but that Disposition differently seasoned, as the
Manners are more or less polished.
by polished Manners I mean, that good breeding
that sort of reserve & self-restraint, w^{ch} is the
consequence of Dependence.

a certain resemblance runs through all
polished Ages - w^{ch} are alike in spiritual things
& differ only in external manners. — Thus
wherever there is Genius, Politeness, Liberty, & Plenty
there prevails an exact and delicate Taste.

There is not only a Stable & immovable Beauty
for there is a common understanding in all times & places,
w^{ch} is never Absolute; but there is also no kind
of Beauty, w^{ch} depends upon Times & places, & is
therefore changeable, such is the case that the mode
of Beauty is never found wthout a mixture of the
other & from these two blended together results what
is called the Taste of an Age.

[Faint, illegible handwriting visible through the paper, likely bleed-through from the reverse side. The text appears to be organized into several paragraphs.]

THE
BACCHANALIANS:

TRAGEDY OF EURIPIDES.

OVID, in the third book of the *Metamorphoses*, has given the history at large of the arrival of Bacchus in Thebes, the adventure of Pentheus, and his miserable death, being torn in pieces by his mother and her sister. This is the subject of the piece I am now to examine; which is a species of Tragedy very different from all the others written by Euripides. This has something in it of the satyrical drama, or perhaps is one of them, like the *Cyclops* *. It is true, indeed, that in the *Bacchanalians* no satyr is introduced; but this does not hinder it from being what was formerly called a satyrical piece, since in both kinds the subject turns alike upon the praises of Bacchus, and of wine. Besides, the *Bacchanalians*, as animated with the spirit of that God, are characters which, in some degree, supply the bold language of satyrs. The *Corybantes* have also given room for these sort of pieces. On the other hand, we shall not in the *Bacchanalians* meet with the same buffooneries, nor the same licentiousness of speech, which prevail in the *Cyclops*; and which it is not fit to explain. Thus, whatever title we choose to give this piece (for the question is about a title only) I shall not insist upon my own conjecture, but shall confine myself to say, that the poem called the *Bacchanalians* has some relation to those from whence Tragedy took its rise. In effect, it is taken up entirely with Bacchus; and the Chorus have

* See the discourse upon the satyrical drama, and the play called the *Cyclops*, at the end of volume III.

no other employment but to celebrate him. We shall find that this kind of poem is not the better for it; and that it became good, but in proportion as it deviated from the subject which gave it birth, to substitute others more noble. Apparently the poets resumed this subject only when the festival of Bacchus was to be celebrated: and I believe I may venture to assert, that the poem in question was composed, and acted on such a conjuncture, as well as the Pentheus of Eschylus, which is lost.

The persons in this drama are the new god Bacchus, Pentheus king of Thebes, the prophet Tiresias, Cadmus the father of queen Agave, mother of Pentheus, Agave herself, two or three officers, and a Chorus of Bacchanalians. The scene is in the vestibule of the palace of Pentheus.

ACT FIRST.

Bacchus opens the scene with declaring who he is, and what design he is engaged in. He says, that he is the son of Semele, a Theban princess, by Jupiter, who killed her with his thunders. He points to her sepulchre in a temple, near the palace, surrounded with vines. He has quitted the Lydians, he says, the Persians, the Bactrians*, the Phrygians, the Medes†, and Arabia‡ the Happy, where he had established his worship; and now, for the first time, visits Greece, to make his power and his divinity be acknowledged there. Accordingly he comes to manifest his power there, by a signal revenge, for the insult he had received. Even the sisters of Semele, his mother, wanted to deprive her of the honour of having been beloved by Jupiter; and, by bitter railery, equally injurious to the mother and the son, had declared, that their abused sister had been seduced by a mortal, who called himself Jupiter; and that this God had punished Semele for her presumption, by consuming her with celestial fire. Bacchus, enraged at this affront, had infused a divine fury into the bosoms of the princesses and Theban ladies; so that they had gone out of Thebes, covered with the skins of wild beasts; each with a Thyrsus in her hand, and a Bacchanalian crown on her head, to

* Antient Bacchia was a province of Persia, between Margiane, Scythia, Judea, and the country of the Massagetes. †

† Media, a kingdom of Asia, not included in Persia. The antients always called

the Persians by the name of Medes.

‡ Arabia the Happy, a large province of Asia, situated between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulph; it is bounded in the midst by the Ocean.

THE BACCHANALIANS.

3

celebrate the festival of Bacchus in the forests, which they made resound with their howlings. By this punishment the God intended to teach the Thebans to respect him; but it was particularly designed against Pentheus, who had refused to acknowledge his Divinity. In order to accomplish his vengeance, he commands a troop of foreign women, who surround him (these are his priestesses) to lead up Phrygian dances, with their tabors and pipes, even before the palace-gates, that he may know how the Thebans will behave when they behold these ceremonies, in honour of the God of the vine. As for him, he says, he will retire for a few moments, to observe the Bacchanalians upon mount Cytheron.

All this shews us that it is a sacred ceremony; on which this piece is founded, and confirms my opinion, that it was designed for the festival of Bacchus, as well as several others for the like solemnities. For as the drama, owed its origin to religion, so religion brought back the drama to its origin. Accordingly, the second scene in this piece of Euripides, which is the interlude sung by the Chorus, consists of nothing more than a pyndaric hymn in honour of Bacchus. The Chorus enjoin all who are present a religious silence, bid the profane depart, and declare, that from henceforward they only will sing the praises of Bacchus. From the first strophe they extol the happiness of all those who are really initiated into the mysteries of this Deity and Cybele; for they always join them together; and they are Phrygian women who speak, that is, priestesses of both these Divinities, and consequently imitators of the Corybantes.

“Happy, say they, are those who sanctify their lives, and
“consecrate themselves by so glorious a worship; who study
“the secrets of the sacred orgies, the manner of wielding the
“Thyrus, and the art of crowning themselves with ivy, in
“honour of Bacchus.” With loud cries they urge the Bacchanalians to conduct their God from Phrygia to Greece. This is the design of the poem; and the stage resounds with the names of *Denis* and *Bromien*, formerly so dear to the good Ronsard.

In the second couplet, they go back even to the birth of the son of Semele. That, by the jealous arts of Juno, she was struck with thunder; and that Jupiter preserved the infant she was pregnant with, by enclosing him in his thigh.

In the third strophe, they instruct the Theban ladies in the ornaments proper for the Bacchanalians to wear. They press them to adorn themselves with them, and to give an example of holy

fury; an example, say they, so efficacious, that soon all Greece shall be seized with the same contagion.

In the fourth, they plainly attribute to the Corybantes, the origin of the orgies of Bacchus. It is to these priests of Cybele, say they, that the invention of the drum, since called the tabor, is due; as likewise the soft airs of the Phrygian flute. The ceremonies of Cybele are become those of Bacchus.

The epode, or the last strophe, is a very spirited description of the progress of the Bacchanalians, or rather of their rapid course through mountains and forests, and of their manner of living while possessed by this sacred madness, feeding upon raw flesh with the blood, their acclamation *Evoé*, and such things. They represent the country from whence they came in the train of Bacchus, as a happy land, flowing with wine, milk, and honey; they describe their God bearing in his hand a torch, which, as he marched along, he shook to serve as a guide to his priestesses, whom he animated by his voice and his gestures. One would think we behold them flying here and there with dishevelled locks and ardent eyes, at the call of their chief: for in this ode they make Bacchus speak with a wildness which Ronsard would formerly have better expressed than we can do now, for we are arrived within a very little of that point when antiquity is nothing more than a dream.

Such is the subject of this hymn, upon which I have dwelt the longer, to shew the genius of this poem, which is very different from all the others of Euripides. Yet it certainly is a tragedy, and one conducted like all those of the same author: but the subject of it, and the turn of several of its scenes, persuade me that it is a sacred tragedy, which was represented during the festival of Bacchus.

The prophet Tiresias (if not the same Tiresias introduced in Oedipus, and other tragedies relating to that prince, yet another of that name) arrives and asks for Cadmus, the son of Agenor. This Cadmus was the founder of Thebes; and had, on account of his great age, resigned the sceptre to his grandson Pentheus. This old prince and Tiresias, struck with the same enthusiasm as the Bacchanalians, had promised, notwithstanding their old age, that they would imitate them, that in order, by so famous an example of obedience, to authorise the worship of Bacchus in Greece.

Cadmus comes out of his palace in a toper's habit, crowned with ivy, and dressed in a stag's spotted skin, in honour, he says,
of

THE BACCHANALIANS.

of his daughter's son, now become a God. Tiresias is equipped in the same manner; but their great embarrassment is their extreme old age; and yet more, Tiresias is blind. He must, according to the poets, have been a long time old and blind, since there is not any tragedies wherein Thebes is concerned, in which he does not act a part under this double character.

Notwithstanding these inconveniencies, the old prophet will not make use of a chariot. It is sufficient for him, that Bacchus and Cadmus will serve him as guides: the name alone of Bacchus recalls his youth. All this is expressed very seriously, and with a religious respect. But it is not possible to familiarise our ideas to superstitions, which all our endeavours cannot hinder from appearing ridiculous to us. Witness, the turning round the Turkish dervises. These when their ceremonies are represented upon our stage as in the *Bourgeois-Gentilhomme*, are not the less absurd for being our cotemporaries. Notwithstanding the resemblance of one thousand years, and one thousand leagues, which have equal power to raise reverence in the spectators, Racine would have taken care to have described the superstitions of the mosques, as he has represented the intrigues of the seraglio. Now the Greek ceremonies ought by us to be viewed in the same light with those of the Turks. We are well enough pleased with such as have any thing solemn and august in them, such as sacrifices; but how shall we excuse the Bacchanalian orgies, especially in two old men, venerable for their age and dignity, who with great gravity prepare to dance, and wander about in masquerade? Even these old men, in Euripides, are under a necessity to apologise to the Athenian audience, for the great disproportion between their age, and the enthusiastic wildness of these dances: but Bacchus merits no less the homage of the old than the young. This is the answer, and they think it ought to be sufficient.

Pentheus now arrives; he had been absent from Thebes some days, and returns extremely enraged at the news he had just heard, and at the extravagant appearance of the Theban ladies, some of whom he had met in his way, and had thrown into prison. He says he has been informed, that under the pious pretence of honouring Bacchus, they had abandoned themselves to an excess of licentiousness which had made him tremble with horror. He swears that he will treat his mother Agave, and the princesses her sisters, in the same manner. From the reports he has heard, he attributes this general frenzy to a young impostor (it is Bacchus
he

he means) who has fascinated all eyes, and intoxicated all minds with the worship of a strange Divinity, whose name he assumes. He treats this god very cavalierly, and resolves upon nothing less than hanging him.

Immediately he perceives Cadmus, the father of Agave, and the prophet Tiresias, in the equipage I have already described. He is not able to forbear reproaching them to their faces with an action which he thinks dishonourable: he imputes it to the weakness of old age, and undertakes to oblige them to quit those ornaments, so unworthy of their rank. It is with Tiresias that he is most offended, because he looks upon him as the author of this extravagance: the interested author of it, he adds, who hoped to draw some advantages to himself from these new festivals, which he was attempting to establish in honour of a new god. To this reproach he adds even threats, and declares, that it is only in consideration of his great age, that he does not condemn him to fetters and a prison. The principal reason Pentheus gives for his anger is, that these ceremonies appear to him to be very pernicious; and that feasts, and excesses in drinking, which make the soul of them, are only snares for innocence and virtue. His reasoning is just enough; for he does not perceive that all this disorder was a punishment inflicted by Bacchus, for his and the Thebans contempt of him. In the sequel we shall find that these arguments urged by the king, are considered as so many blasphemies, for which he will suffer very severely.

In effect, the Chorus exclaim loudly at this harangue, which they think alike injurious to the Gods, to Cadmus, and Echion, the king's father. Tiresias answers with more calmness; and begins his discourse with sentences which tend to shew, that the arguments urged by Pentheus were specious, but had no solid foundation. He afterwards extols the power and greatness of the God Bacchus; and foretels how much he will be one day revered in Greece. He founds this prediction upon the usefulness of this Divinity to mortals. Ceres and Bacchus, he says, are more necessary than all others to life: the one furnishes corn, the other wine. The old man praises this liquor in such a manner as shews it is far from being indifferent to him: "Wine, says he, softens our cares, and by producing sleep, lulls mortals into a happy oblivion of their miseries."

As for the story of Bacchus being enclosed in Jupiter's thigh till nine months were completed, Tiresias gives an explanation of
this

THE BACCHANALIANS.

7

this enigma, which proves, that the Pagans did not understand their fables literally, but only as symbols, under which, however, other errors were couched; or, at least, such ignorance of the true notion of the Divinity, as is too common. He declares, that nothing more is meant by it than that Jupiter, desirous of preserving the infant from the jealous rage of Juno, placed him in a cloud of condensed air, where he kept him as in hostage. This is a meer play of words, which turns upon the mention of *air*, of *hostages*, and of the *thigh*, which have some similitude in the Greek. Eustathius says, that this fable took its rise from a mountain in the Indies called Meros, where Bacchus was educated. The prophet, that he may omit nothing in favour of the Bacchanalian ceremonies, adds, that the enthusiasm they inspire is prophetic; and that wine unveils futurity. He would have spoke more truly, if he had asserted, that it discovers the past and the present, according to the proverb *in vino veritas*. And lastly, Tiresias will have it, that the power of Bacchus resembles that of the god Mars. He often puts whole armies to flight.

It is easy to perceive, that all this is allegorical; and that the effects produced by wine were considered as so many attributes of the God Bacchus: but it is not so easy to answer what Pentheus says concerning the licentiousness which he fears may be the consequence of these Bacchanalian feasts; and indeed Tiresias passes over this objection slightly. "The chastity of women, says he, depends upon their own prevailing inclinations. The Bacchanalian feasts neither make them better nor worse." Cadmus joins with Tiresias in endeavouring to gain over Pentheus, and to prevail upon him to pay Bacchus those honours which he now expected from Greece. He tries to move him by the consideration of his own interest. "Although, says he, Bacchus should not be a Deity, yet he ought to be honoured as such by his relations: we are too nearly concerned in him not to be willing to pay him Divine honours." Cadmus, at length, endeavours to intimidate the king, by reminding him of Acteon's fate, who was devoured by Diana's hounds for his vanity, in pretending to be more skilful than this Goddess in the art of hunting. Ovid assigns another reason for Acteon's punishment.

Pentheus, instead of being moved by the arguments, the intreaties, and the terrors these two old men seek to inspire him with, falls into a violent rage with Tiresias; and to punish him, commands his attendants to enter the prophet's house by force,

and

8 THE BACCHANALIANS.

and to destroy every thing in it, without excepting even the sacred crowns and ornaments. At the same time he orders others to make a strict search for this stranger, who had infected Thebes with a drunken fury, and to bring him bound before him. Tiresias contents himself with pitying the obstinacy of Pentheus, without predicting to him yet the misfortunes that are to befall him; and retires, accompanied by Cadmus, to implore the God to spare Thebes, and her infatuated king.

It is not easy to conceive why Pentheus, who is so full of indignation against his grandfather, the prophet, and the stranger, whom he has not yet seen, takes no notice of that croud of women who compose the Chorus, and who so avowedly vindicate the divinity of Bacchus. Is this a fault? or rather, is the king ignorant of these women being Bacchanalians? This seems to be the most probable, since, in effect, the Chorus are grown calm and moderate. But scarce is Pentheus retired, when these women, in the interlude, exclaim against the blasphemies they have so lately been witnesses to. Their notions of morality are certainly less rigid than those of Pentheus: for they make wisdom to consist not in being too scrupulous, but in knowing how to enjoy the present moment. They wish to be transported to the Cyprian isle, the abode of Venus and the loves; or to Paphos, and Mount Olympus, where Cupid and the Graces reside. There, say they, we should be at liberty to celebrate the God Bacchus. At length, all their wishes seem to be centered in Bacchus and Cupid: the moral of the drama covered over with the pretence of piety.

A C T II.

The officers of Pentheus bring Bacchus before him. They relate with astonishment, that this stranger came and surrendered himself with an air of the greatest tranquillity; that his gentleness had wholly disarmed their indignation; and that they had with regret obeyed their orders to bring him as a prisoner. They add another circumstance still more surprising. The Bacchanalians, imprisoned by the king's order, saw their fetters fall off, and the doors of their prisons open, from whence they had retired, without any violence. They conclude with saying, that this stranger is an extraordinary person, who has filled Thebes with prodigies.

Pentheus, however, cannot refrain from insulting him: he tells him, with a bitter raillery, that, doubtless, he is come to Thebes, with

with an intention to make conquests; but that to judge by his beauty, and the delicacy of his air, he can be nothing less than an hero. He questions him concerning his birth: Bacchus, without discovering himself yet, confesses that he is a Lydian, and that he has been initiated by Bacchus into his mysteries; but he refuses to declare what these mysteries are. As for the orgies, he says, they are celebrated by all nations; and that he is come to introduce them among the Greeks. The time chosen for the celebration of these mysteries, which is midnight, being objected to by Pentheus, Bacchus replies, That it is the most sacred time, because darkness has something in it solemn and august, and fitted to excite a pious horror in the mind. Pentheus insists upon this objection, and says, that the night is chosen to lay snares for chastity. The God answers as Tiresias had done before, that day or night are alike indifferent to those who are already corrupted in their inclinations. The king falls into a transport of rage: Bacchus treats him as an impious man; and, full of a noble confidence, answers his threats no otherwise than by declaring, that he will free himself from his power, and will punish him for his obstinacy. The king commands his officers to bind him, and throw him into a dungeon: he threatens the women of his train; that is to say, the Chorus, with the same fate, or else to condemn them to slavery. But why did he say nothing to them in the preceding act? After this the king retires, and his officers lead away Bacchus as a prisoner of state.

This act, we see, is scarce any thing more than one scene, in which Bacchus makes himself sport with the rage and curiosity of Pentheus. The Chorus, in the interlude, complain, in an elegant style, of the Thebans, addressing themselves to their fountain Dirce. "Why have you driven away Bacchus? Ah! a day will come, when, surrounded with vines, you shall pay divine honours to this God, whom you now treat with such cruel indignity." These women implore the Gods to destroy Pentheus. They call with loud cries upon Bacchus, in whatever place he now is, to appear; for they are ignorant that the stranger imprisoned by Pentheus is the real Bacchus, who had made himself visible under a human form.

Their songs are interrupted by a celestial voice. It is Bacchus, who speaks to them without being seen. That instant the earth trembles, the palace of Pentheus is shaken, and part of it tumbles down, to make known the presence of the God; and

to punish the king by the same sentence which he had pronounced against Tiresias. The Chorus become furious with this spectacle; and with the cries of Bacchus, animate the tumult. "Burn, burn, they cry, the palace of this impious king." Accordingly the flames are seen to rise on all sides; and the audience is made to observe that they proceed from the tomb of Semele, who has been insulted in the person of her son.

ACT III.

Mean time terror having prevailed over rage in the hearts of the Bacchanalians.; this, together with their intoxication, make them fall almost fainting to the earth. Bacchus appears again before them, under the form of a young Lydian, as before. He comforts them. They express great astonishment at seeing him again, him whom they had taken for an ordinary man: they ask him with mingled fear and joy, how he had been able to escape the hands of the tyrant? "Very easily, answers Bacchus: rage has blinded his understanding, and fascinated his eyes; and I have imposed upon him." In effect, according to Bacchus's recital, who still makes the Chorus believe he is only a meer mortal, and the friend of the new Deity, Pentheus had bound a bull, whom in his excess of fury he had taken for him. Hereupon the God Bacchus took possession of the palace, and shook the columns that supported it. It was believed to be all in flames. Pentheus ran eagerly to extinguish the fire. A spectre appeared before him. He pursued it with his sword in his hand, supposing it had been his prisoner. "It is not to be doubted but he will soon return, adds the disguised God, with rage in his heart; but I do not fear him." Immediately Pentheus appears, less concerned at the misfortunes which had happened to his palace, than at the flight of his captive. Astonished at meeting with him again, he asks him by what means he had escaped? "Did I not tell you," replies Bacchus, that the God whom I serve would deliver me? "Confine me in dungeons, wall me in with towers, all will be to as little purpose. However, hear what this domestic, who is coming has to say to you: I will not fly."

The person mentioned by Bacchus, is a shepherd, who comes from mount Cytheron, to relate to Pentheus the miracles performed at the orgies of the Bacchanalians: yet shews some fear lest he should offend the king, who was very easily provoked to

anger, and very violent when he was so. This marks still more the character of the sovereign of Thebes. Pentheus encourages him, and permits him to speak freely. He does so: and his recital is a series of incredible prodigies, as we shall find. He tells the king, That at day-break, when he was leading his flocks to the top of mount Cytheron, he perceived three troops of women. Antinoë, the mother of the unfortunate Acteon, was at the head of the first. The second was led by Agave, the king's mother; and the third by his sister Ino. All had been at sleep under the shade of the trees: but great decency appeared among them, and not the least appearances of that licentiousness which wine inspires; or of any thing that could justify the king's suspicions. Agave awaked first, and by strange howlings dissipated that slumber which had held her companions entranced too long after the appearance of Aurora. Immediately they opened their eyes: they started up. Decency ruled every look and motion. (This is what the shepherd takes care to observe, that he may undeceive the king.) "The youngest among them, adds he, yielded not in modesty to those whom age had rendered most reserved." Here the shepherd begins to describe their dress, which is very singular. "They suffer their hair, says he, to flow loosely about their shoulders. They cloath themselves with the spotted skins of stags, carelessly fastened on. Round their heads they wear circles of living serpents. Of those who were in a condition to give suck, some carried kids, others young wolfs, and presented their breasts to them. All were crowned with ivy mixed with oak. One of them struck a rock with her Thyrsus, and instantly a stream of water gushed forth. Another touched the ground with her torch, and a fountain of wine appeared. Such as chose milk produced it by gently raking the earth. Even the Thyrsus became fruitful in their hands, and honey streamed from each in great abundance."

The Thyrsus, we know, was a stick, wreathed round with branches of ivy. These miracles, particularly that of producing water from a rock, have occasioned some learned men to think, that the Bacchus of the Greeks was Moses, whose history they have here disguised: witness the rock which this leader of God's peculiar people, struck with his rod; and water gushed forth. But it is foreign to our purpose to dwell on such parallels.

The shepherd continuing his relation, says, That his companions, astonished at these prodigies, had assembled, to confer together

gether on what was to be done; when one among them proposed, that they should secure these Bacchanalians, and carry them before the king, supposing they should thereby render him a signal service. This being resolved on in their council, they believed the best time for executing their design would be while the women were performing the Bacchanalian dances. Accordingly they hid themselves, that they might be spectators of this ceremony, where every thing about them seemed to dance*; even the mountain, and the savage beasts. They suddenly rushed among them, and seized Agave; but she uttered a horrible cry, and her companions flew with such eagerness and fury to her assistance, that the shepherds, amazed and terrified, fled: after which the Bacchanalians satiated their fury upon a herd of bulls. Here the shepherd describes a more astonishing prodigy than any he had yet mentioned. One woman, he says, was seen to drag after her a bull. Another tore one of those formidable animals in pieces, and scattered about its mangled limbs. The whole plain was covered with their bodies, and wet with their blood; and all this was done in an instant. "After this exploit, continues he, the Bacchanalians, like a flight of birds, lightly traversed the ground, till they came to a plain at the foot of mount Cytheron, near the cities of Yfia and Erythra, where they destroyed all with fire and sword. Greedy of spoil, no burden seemed too weighty for them to bear; not even iron and steel. They carried off the young children, and spread desolation every where. Their heads were environed with flames, which did not consume them. The inhabitants took up arms; but the looks alone of the Bacchanalians inspired

* Longinus, in his thirteenth chapter, translated by Despreaux, says, on occasion of a passage in the seven chiefs at the siege of Thebes, which we have already quoted, in the second volume; that "this Poet, (Eschylus he means) by affecting to be sublime, often falls into gross and unpolished thoughts. Euripides, also, by a noble emulation, exposes himself sometimes to the same danger: for example, in *Eschylus*, the palace of Lycurgus is shaken, and becomes enraged at the sight of Bacchus."

Le palais en fureur mugit à son aspect.

Or as M. Dacier will have it:

Du palais en fureur les combles ébranlés
Tremblent en mugissant.

"Euripides has this very thought; but, expresses it differently, and softens it in some measure:"

La montagne à leurs cris répond en mugissant.

Or according to M. Dacier:

The mountain shook, and answered to their cries. In the Greek of Euripides, there is this line, *Πᾶς δὲ συνέκλινον ἄρας. Totus mons bacchabatur simul.* Euripides designed to express that intoxication which made every thing seem to turn round, and be in motion.

"them

“ them with terror ; while each stroke with the Thyrsus carried
“ with it inevitable death. In a word, these women gained a
“ complete victory over the soldiers who opposed them : a cer-
“ tain proof of the power of that Deity, who protects and fights
“ for them. The conquering Bacchanalians returned to those sources
“ of food which they had produced out of the bowels of the earth :
“ there they took a little repose, and washed off the blood with
“ which they were covered, while the serpents they wore on their
“ heads feasted upon it.”

The shepherd's whole narration leads him to this conclusion, that Pentheus cannot avoid receiving into his dominions so powerful a God, by whom such miracles have been performed. “ Were
“ it only, that he has bestowed wine upon mortals, such a gift
“ deserves that we should erect altars to the giver : for without
“ wine, love and joy are no more.” This scandalous line shews plainly, that the Greek piety required no great strictness in morals ; and that the impiety of Pentheus was more virtuous : which persuades me, that the character of this Tragedy is the same with that of an Opera ; and probably it has more than one model in antiquity : for we find so great a similitude between our kind of Opera and this piece we are examining, that this only will be sufficient to support what I have advanced ; and besides, what absurdity is there in supposing that both Tragedy and the Opera took their rise at the same time, from hymns composed in honour of Bacchus ? By allowing the Opera to have been so antient, it will not make it appear more innocent in our eyes ; especially when we see there vice adorned with the brightest colours, and with impunity triumphing over virtue.

All that the shepherd relates serves only to enflame still more the rage of the incredulous Pentheus. The violence of the Bacchanalians provokes him ; and he considers their bold actions as a stain to the Theban glory : a stain which he thinks necessary to be washed off with their blood. In his first emotions he resolves to stop by the severest punishments, this contagious evil in its birth ; he, therefore, gives orders to his soldiers to go and chastise this frantic troop, and to strike at the very root of the disease.

The shepherd renews his solicitations, and remonstrates to the king, that he is taking arms against a powerful, and implacable God. “ How, resumes the king, must I then be a slave to the
“ caprice of my own subjects ? ” “ No, replies the shepherd : I
“ will take care to bring back the Bacchanalians without violence.”

Pentheus.

Pentheus appears surprised at this proposal. He thinks some secret treason lies hid under it; and that his subjects have all engaged to trample upon his authority. At last the shepherd proposes to him to be himself an eye-witness of these orgies.

The king consents to this expedient; and by this we may perceive that his reason begins to be disordered by the secret power of Bacchus. For now full of the design which he had so suddenly resolved on, he grows impatient to see the ceremonies which he detests. He is told, that he must disguise himself like one of the Bacchanalians. This condition shocks him at first: but at length his curiosity, and eager desire of revenge, prevail. He departs with the shepherd; upon which Bacchus says, "Unhappy wretch, go meet thy ruin." He tells the Chorus, that Pentheus will soon be deprived of his reason; and that Bacchus, by whom he is reduced to that miserable state, will soon expose him to the scorn and derision of his people, under the habit of a Bacchanalian, in order to punish him for his blasphemies. He even anticipates part of the catastrophe. For he says plainly, that Pentheus will fall a victim to the frenzy of his mother. "Then, adds he, he will confess, but too late, that Bacchus is the most benevolent, and at the same time the most terrible of the Gods."

The Bacchanalians upon the stage express their impatience to celebrate the orgies; and to subdue their enemies, as the Theban ladies had done. Then they reflect upon the punishment with which Pentheus is threatened. "The Gods, say they, never forget the impious; and their punishment is not the less certain for being sometimes delayed." Lastly, they call those truly happy who lead a life of tranquillity and devotion. Such is the ode sung in the interlude.

A C T IV.

Pentheus returns; but in an equipage unbecoming a king, and in a state of mind very different from what he was before. Bacchus scoffingly calls to him, and tells him, that he looks like one of the daughters of Cadmus. The king of Thebes is cloathed in a long robe, and a girdle. On his head he has a kind of Bacchanalian mitre, with an ivy crown. Over his shoulders is thrown a mantle of a spotted skin; and he bears a Thyrsus in his hand: *Quantum mutatus ab illo!*

Finding his senses strangely disordered, he cries out, "I think I behold two suns, and two Thebes." This is that beautiful passage

passage of Euripides, which Virgil has translated almost word for word.

*Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus
Et geminum Solem & duplices se ostendere Thebas*

*Æneid. l. 4.
c. 464.*

Pentheus fancies that Bacchus is a bull, armed with horns; and Bacchus tells him, that he sees very exactly, and that he is now worthy to be associated with the celebrators of the orgies. For Bacchus, according to the fable, had his head adorned with the horns of a bull, as a symbol of his strength, and not for a token of a certain French jest, absolutely unknown to the Greeks and Latins.

PENTHEUS. Whom do I most resemble? Ino, or Agave?

BACCHUS. I think I see them when I look upon thee. But permit me to set these locks in order: it was not thus I disposed them under the fillet that binds thy forehead.

PENTHEUS. It was in dancing a Bacchanalian dance, as thou sawest, that I disordered this curl.

BACCHUS. Well, I will put it in its place again, since I have the care of regulating thy dress. Hold up thy head.

PENTHEUS. This care be thine then. From henceforward I am entirely devoted to thee.

BACCHUS. Thy girdle is not bound fast enough; and the folds of thy robe do not descend gracefully to thy feet.

PENTHEUS. Not on this side; but the other is well enough.

BACCHUS. Wilt thou not look upon me as thy friend, when, happily undeceived, thou shalt have been a witness to the modesty of the Bacchanalians?

PENTHEUS. Most certainly. But to imitate them exactly, ought I to hold the Thyrsus in my right or my left hand?

BACCHUS. In thy right hand, raising it at the same time from thy right foot. I congratulate thee for having so soon listened to the suggestions of thy reason in my favour.

This comic scene shews plainly, that Pentheus has now lost his reason; and it is surprising, that a God should act a part in so barbarous a comedy. I say barbarous; because it ends fatally for this king, already dishonoured by the condition to which Bacchus had reduced him. This God is even cruel enough to adorn his victim with his own hands; to deprive him at once of his sceptre, his honour, and his life. How was it possible for Pagans to endure such

such a representation? The fable had obtained a general prevalence*. Pentheus was, in their eyes, criminal, and we must raise our imaginations to these strange notions, or confess that the ancients wanted common sense. One of these suppositions is necessary, and one alone can be allowed, after the great strokes of genius which we have just contemplated.

Pentheus utters many more extravagancies still. He asks whether he shall not be able to remove mount Cytheron with the Bacchanalians upon it? A question fit for the mouth of Pantagruel. He is told that he may; but that he ought in compassion to spare the residence of Pan, and the Nymphs. This consideration determines Pentheus to be contented with using artifice to surprise the Bacchanalians while they are asleep, like birds in their nests. "Yes," says Bacchus maliciously, thou wilt take them, if thou be not taken thyself." Pentheus is so far transported with his frenzy as to resolve upon going thus equipped through the midst of the city, to shew that he is capable of undertaking this glorious enterprize singly. He forgets that before his madness he thought it shameful to submit to be disguised like a woman; and that he was desirous of being conducted secretly to mount Cytheron. But what is more striking in this strange ceremony, is, that Bacchus has the cruelty to tell him, that he is going to a battle, which will gain him immortal glory; and that he will return supported upon his mother's arm. "I will conduct thee thither myself, adds he, and we, as well as the God Bacchus, will be conquerors."

The Chorus take leave of Pentheus in much the same manner. They implore the Furies to animate the daughters of Cadmus to massacre this miserable king, who is become their spy. The Chorus prophetically describe the event, as if they saw it with their own eyes. "Agave, say these women, will perceive her son in ambuscade. That instant she will give the word to destroy him, and the Menades will sacrifice him to their rage."

This is expressed in a very lively manner, as well as the prayers offered by the Chorus, who seem to sacrifice Pentheus in their words, as the Bacchanalians do in fact.

* In this they considered only the fable; the allegorical part of which they understand much better than we can do. For it must not be supposed that the fabulous history, as it is related in the *Metamorphoses*, was the essence, or principal part of their religion.

This was only a poetical religion, as we shall prove elsewhere. The difficulty is to connect real Paganism with the fables admitted by the ancients concerning the same Gods whom they adored.

The interval between the projection of this scheme and the execution of it is very short. A man comes to declare, that Pentheus is dead. The Chorus openly triumph at this news, and extol the power of Bacchus. The officer, however, gives a circumstantial account of the event, which I shall abridge. "The stranger and myself, says he, accompanied Pentheus to mount Cytheron. The king slipped into a little wood, that he might not be perceived by the Bacchanalians, who were in a neighbouring valley. There all were employed, some in adorning their Thyrsus with fresh wreaths of ivy; others in singing alternately Bacchanalian hymns; others in dancing. Pentheus, who did not think he was conveniently placed to view them distinctly, endeavoured to climb up upon a tree; but the stranger spared him part of his trouble. He seized one of the highest branches of an oak, bent it down to the earth with the utmost ease; and having placed the king upon it, raised him up gently to the top. But, adds the officer, he saw not the Bacchanalians so well as he was seen by them. As for the stranger, he disappeared like lightning. That moment we heard a cry imitating the voice of Bacchus. *My dear companions,* said the unseen speaker, *I have delivered up to you the traitor, who scoffs at our orgies. Revenge me, revenge yourselves.* Suddenly a sacred flame appears to break out of the earth, and ascends to the skies. The winds are hushed; the air is calm; the leaves of the trees are motionless; and a religious silence reigns throughout the woods. The Bacchanalians, who had not heard distinctly the first words, looked eagerly on every side, and animated by a second voice, they knew the signal of Bacchus their master. We saw them all fly swifter than doves, with Agave and her sisters at their head. They bounded o'er the rocks, and swam through torrents, as if impelled by the powerful breath of the God. In the midst of their course they perceived Pentheus: they stopped; their fury was redoubled. The stones flew thick about the unhappy king: even the Thyrsus, darted at him with excessive force, supplied the place of other arms; but Pentheus was defended by his situation. At length the Bacchanalians began to tear up the tree by the root: Agave urged them to do it. Let us seize, cries she, this profane witness of our secret mysteries, and prevent his ever revealing them. All set their hands to the work. The tree, after many shocks, was thrown down; and Pentheus fell with it. Fain would he have avoided the dreadful fate that seemed to await him: to make

" himself known to his mother he tore off the mitre that crowned his
 " forehead. He had recourse to supplications. O mother, cried
 " he, know your son. Must my error cost me my life, and must
 " I lose it by your hands? Agave's lips were covered with foam;
 " her bloodshot-eyes rolled in a hideous manner: full of the in-
 " spiring God, she heard, she saw not her son. She is no longer a
 " mother: far from feeling any tender emotions, she flew fiercely
 " upon Pentheus, and fastening upon one arm, she tore it off with
 " ease. Bacchus inspired her with unusual strength. Ino also
 " mangled him on the other side. Antioe and the whole troop
 " surrounded him, and with terrible cries threw themselves upon
 " him. As long as he had any remains of life he groaned and
 " sighed: but his torments were soon at an end. In an instant he
 " was torn in pieces. Scarce was his mangled carcase sufficient to
 " satisfy the rage of these furies. His torn limbs were scattered
 " about the plain. Agave took his head, and bears it on her Thy-
 " rus: a horrid trophy, which is soon to overwhelm her with
 " anguish."

The officer adds, that she is coming back to the palace, bearing
 the head of her son; and that he will make haste to get out of her
 way, that he may not behold so horrible a spectacle. He concludes
 with observing, that the Gods ought to be feared and honoured,
 and then retires. As for the Chorus they rejoice in the victory of
 Bacchus, and the death of Pentheus.

A C T V.

Agave appears upon the stage with the remains of her son, which
 she takes for those of a lion whom she has killed. She boasts of
 this victory to the Phrygian Bacchanalians; and they have the in-
 humanity to congratulate her upon it. This princess, who is not
 yet recovered from her enthusiasm, invites them to the feast, in
 which her prey is to be served up. She is impatient to receive
 the compliments of Pentheus on this exploit, of which she will
 make him the compliment, amidst the joy of the festival. But what
 is still more horrible, she is soon fatally undeceived. For the Cho-
 rus intreat her to shew her prey to the citizens; and Agave sends
 for them to be witnesses of her triumph. She had even before
 this sent to invite Cadmus and Pentheus, to view, as she pass'd
 along, the head of the lion, which she supposes she has van-
 quished.

Cadmus.

Cadmus arrives, followed by his officers, who bear some of the miserable remains of his grandson, which he had himself taken up upon mount Cytheron. He went thither, as we have seen, with a far different expectation than of finding Pentheus torn in pieces. He had met his two daughters Ino and Antinoe still frantic; and now he finds Agave, their sister, in the same condition. "Enjoy, my father, she cries, enjoy the glory of having given birth to daughters so capable of signalising thy name; and who have quitted the softness of female occupations, to perform such noble exploits. But it is I, in particular, whom thou oughtest to congratulate, when thou beholdest the glorious testimony of my valour, which I now lay at thy feet. Receive this head, suspend it in the palace; and proud of thy daughter's victory, make a pompous feast for thy friends. For canst thou ever enjoy a satisfaction more pleasing than in beholding us after so noble a deed?"

CADMUS. O grief unutterable! O Gods! have I then lived to see my daughters guilty of so execrable a crime! Cruel Agave, to what a sacrifice dost thou invoke the Gods? To what a feast dost thou invite the Thebans, and thy father? O wretched daughters! O more wretched father! O Bacchus, how just, but how terrible is thy vengeance! Thou hast not spared even thy own blood.

AGAVE. Age is always severe. Melancholy is its portion. May my son, at least, resemble me, and tread in the steps of so warlike a mother! But, alas, he braves the Gods. O my father, warn him seriously not to confide so much in his dangerous philosophy. But where is he now? Let him be sent for to share my glory.

CADMUS. Alas, how much art thou to be pitied, when thou shalt know thy misfortune! Why canst thou not still continue in this error!

AGAVE. How! what crime have I committed?

CADMUS. Look up to the skies, my daughter.

AGAVE. Well, I do.

CADMUS. Do they appear the same to thee as formerly?

AGAVE. They appear to me to be more serene than ever I beheld them before.

CADMUS. Ah, thou art not yet returned to thy reason, Agave!

AGAVE. I do not comprehend thy meaning. I only perceive that my senses grow calm by degrees.

CADMUS. Hear me then, and answer me.

AGAVE. Restored to myself, I remember nothing of what I have just said to thee.

CADMUS. To whom did I give thee in marriage?

AGAVE. To Echion, that man who derived his birth from the teeth of Mars's serpent.

CADMUS. And what pledge of thy nuptials hadst thou?

AGAVE. Pentheus. But to what do all these questions tend?

CADMUS. Look upon thy dreadful conquest.

AGAVE. It is the head of an huge lion. My companions can witness to this truth.

CADMUS. Once more, I say, cast thy eyes upon this fatal object.

AGAVE. (knowing the head of Pentheus.) O Heaven!

CADMUS. Behold the lion whom thou hast slaughtered.

AGAVE. Ah! it is Pentheus!

CADMUS. Alas! too late thou know'st him.

AGAVE. Who is it that has murdered him? How came he to fall into my hands?

CADMUS. O horrid truth, must it let in its light upon her soul?

AGAVE. O pardon me my father. I groan, I tremble. Horror seizes me: yet explain thyself I conjure thee.

CADMUS. By thee and by thy sisters he was murdered.

AGAVE. O Gods! Where? in this palace? or elsewhere? O tell me.

CADMUS. In the same fatal place where Acteon was torn in pieces.

AGAVE. Alas! what drew my unhappy son to mount Cytheron?

CADMUS. He went in defiance of Bacchus, and to scoff at your ceremonies.

AGAVE. By what means were we ourselves transported thither?

CADMUS. By a Bacchanalian frenzy, which seized the whole city, as well as thee.

AGAVE. Ah Bacchus! is it thou then that hast undone me?

CADMUS. Thou hast offended him.

Agave asks where the body of her son is. Cadmus tells her, that with great difficulty he has been able to collect together his mangled limbs. He condemns Pentheus for his impiety: he pities and laments him: he foresees the fatal consequences that will attend his death. Himself condemned to banishment, and both he and his daughters exposed to suffer the most cruel distresses, he deploras this miserable reverse of fortune, and the loss of his throne. Even the Chorus afford some tears to his misfortunes. At length the God Bacchus himself appears. He declares to Cadmus his future destiny; that is to say, that he will be banished from the Illyrian
races,

aces*, that he will make new conquests, and be transformed into a serpent: in a word, all that Ovid has so elegantly described in the fourth book of his metamorphoses, verse 562.

The father and daughter, at the knowledge of so many miseries, abandon themselves to tears and complaints; and being obliged to separate, the former to leave Greece entirely, the latter to depart from Thebes, with her sisters, they take a tender and melancholy leave of each other. Agave, uncertain what place she shall choose for her asylum, resolves, at least, to go so far, that she may lose sight of Cytheron, that impure mountain, which she has watered with the blood of her unhappy son.

THE CYCLOPS, a satyrical drama.

This should have a place here, according to the order in which the plays of Euripides stand in all the editions of his works; but the reader will find it at the end of this volume, where I think it more properly placed.

* Illyria, a country of great extent in Europe, antiently bounded on the North by the two Pannonias, on the West by Istria, on the South by the Adriatic sea, and on the East by the Upper Mæsia, and Macedonia.

THE
HERACLIDÆ:

A

TRAGEDY OF EURIPIDES.

THIS piece, with regard to the disposition of the incidents, resembles the *Suppliants*, and the *Hercules mad*, although there is a great difference in the history upon which they are founded: for here it relates to the children of Hercules. But the subject in each is the distress of some unhappy persons, who are flying from the persecutions of their enemies. Euristhæus, not satisfied, though Hercules is dead, resolves to extirpate his whole race. He pursues the children of that hero from country to country, even into the heart of Greece, which is Athens. There they take refuge at an altar*. The Athenians engage in their defence; and Euristhæus falls a victim to that vengeance which he had resolved to execute upon them.

The actors in this tragedy are Iolas; Copreus, a messenger from Euristhæus; Demophoon, king of Athens; Acamas, his brother, silent personage; Macaria, the daughter of Hercules; Alcmena, the mother of Hercules; a slave; an officer; Euristhæus, king of Argos; and the Chorus.

A C T I.

Iolas, the kinsman of Hercules, and his constant attendant, appears in the midst of a number of children, who surround the altar of Jupiter. This spectacle makes known the first part of the subject. Iolas explains the rest in the manner of a soliloquy. "How de-

* It was the altar of Jupiter. They have recourse to this God to defend them against Juno, who had animated Euristhæus against

Hercules and his whole race, because Hercules was the fruit of Jupiter's amours with Alcmena.

"testable

“testable is that man, says he, whose actions are all influenced by
 “self-interest alone! Nature and justice require that he should sa-
 “crifice himself for the good of his neighbours. It was this sacred
 “law which made me quit Argos, and all the enjoyments of life,
 “to share the labours of Hercules. It is this which has induced
 “me to watch over the safety of his children, without reflecting
 “that I myself have occasion for a deliverer. Alas! scarce was
 “Hercules received among the Gods, when Euristhæus resolved
 “our ruin. We thought ourselves happy to purchase our lives by
 “banishment: we fled; but the inhuman tyrant persecutes us still.
 “He spreads terror among all the cities to which we have recourse,
 “and banishes compassion and hospitality. Insolent in his power,
 “with which he menaces them, he forces them to espouse his
 “quarrel, and to interdict us their sacred asylums. Their interested
 “policy makes them prefer his friendship to justice; and
 “Hercules is nothing, since he is no longer in the world. I have
 “no army to defend the cause of these orphans; but moved with
 “their misery, I have become the companion of their flight, and
 “shall, at least, have the consolation to avoid the reproach of in-
 “gratitude. Here we are at Marathon. Refuged at this altar, our
 “only hope is in the son of Theseus. United as he is to Hercules
 “by blood, he, doubtless, will in the children respect the memory
 “of their father, and be softened at the sight of these melancholy
 “objects.” Accordingly, besides those which Iolas points to with-
 out the temple, he gives the audience to understand, that Alcmena
 keeps the children of Hercules concealed within the temple itself;
 and that Hyllus, the eldest of them, accompanied by some of his
 brothers, is gone in quest of some other resource, in case the Athe-
 nians should refuse them an asylum in this city.

Iolas, perceiving Copreus, a messenger from Euristhæus, coming
 directly towards him, interrupts his complaints. “Come hither
 “instantly, my dear children, says he, stand close beside me; take
 “hold of my garments, for you see your persecutor comes.” Har-
 rassed with such incessant wanderings, without being allowed
 the shortest interval of rest, Iolas utters imprecations against Copreus,
 and him by whom he is sent. The deputy inhumanly insults the
 fugitives. “Can you imagine, says he, that there is a people upon
 “earth so infatuated as to incur the rage of the king of Argos, by
 “supporting such miserable wretches? Leave this altar, and come
 “to receive the punishment that awaits you.” The punishment they
 were doomed to was to be stoned to death. Iolas pleads the sanctuary

of the altar, which he embraces, and the freedom of Attica, which is wholly independent of Argos. Copreus threatens to force them from the altar; and just as he is preparing to make good his words, Iolas with loud cries implores the assistance of Jupiter and the inhabitants.

Immediately some old men of Attica appear; they are those who compose the Chorus. This scene informs them of the quality of the suppliants, and of the violence that was offered them. The Chorus hinder Copreus from proceeding any further till the king arrives, who appears soon after with his brother Alcamas. Demophoon asks the Chorus the occasion of those cries which he had heard; and who those children are that surround the altar?

Being fully informed, he next hears what Copreus has to say, who with great haughtiness declares to him the will of Euristheus. He tells Demophoon, that he certainly will not do what none of the other cities of Greece durst attempt; but that he will rather choose to acquire the friendship than incur the resentment of the king of Argos. This speech is not so much a request as a threat, and a declaration of war: but Demophoon, without suffering himself to be won by the offers, or terrified with the menaces of the ambassador, answers like a just and wise prince, that he cannot pretend to judge of this affair without hearing what both parties have to urge in their defence.

“ Happy country, says Iolas; where we are, at least, allowed,
 “ what in every other we have been denied, the liberty of plead-
 “ ing for ourselves! But what do I say? We have now nothing
 “ to do with the king of Argos. We are no longer Argives. The
 “ decree which banished us from our country restored us to
 “ freedom. With respect to Euristheus, we are strangers: what
 “ would he have more? Must an Argive, who is banished from
 “ his country, be banished likewise from all Greece? Yet surely
 “ Athens must be excepted. Athens will grant us an asylum;
 “ and the fear of offending Euristheus will not prevent her from
 “ shewing compassion to the children of Hercules. No, Athens
 “ is not a city to tremble at the name of the king of Argos. She
 “ is a free state; but she would cease to be so, if she should com-
 “ ply with the will of Euristheus. I know the Athenian people;
 “ they will prefer death to infamy.”

Here he interrupts himself by a very natural reflection, that such eulogiums have the appearance of flattery. He therefore contents himself with observing to the two kings, that the

the children of Hercules being descended from Pelops, are, by consequence, their relations; and he adds, that gratitude ought to influence them more even than the ties of nature, since Hercules had delivered Theseus their father from hell. "For this obligation, continues Iolas, all the return these children expect from thee is, that thou wilt not deliver them up to their enemy, by suffering them to be forced away from this altar. What dishonour would it reflect upon thee and Athens? Cast thy eyes upon them. They are suppliants; they are exiles; they are thy relations, who implore thy protection: they are the children of Hercules who kneel before thee. It is for them that I embrace thy knees: O do thou condescend to hold the place of a kinsman to them, of a friend, a father, or, if thou wilt, a master: only preserve them from the death to which they are doomed."

The Chorus are moved by this speech; and Demophoon answers with great dignity, "I am on many accounts engaged to protect such guests, the reverence I owe to Jupiter, a motive superior to all others, the relation in which I stand to them, the gratitude I owe their father, and lastly, I am obliged in honour to protect them." Accordingly, he tells the ambassador, that he may deliver this answer to his master: If Euristheus has any just cause of complaint against the fugitive princes, he will do him justice; but till he has made that clear, he is determined not to suffer Copreus to take them by force out of a free country. The ambassador contests this point with the king, and insolently attempts to drag the fugitive princes along with him. Demophoon, on his side, threatens to repel him by force. The Chorus blame both for these sallies of rage; and Copreus growing calmer, retires, after denouncing war against the Athenians. "Our troops, says he, are ready, and soon shalt thou see Euristheus at the head of the Argives." The Chorus insinuate, that the Athenians are going to make preparations for the defence of the children of Hercules: and the remainder of the act is taken up with grateful thanks from Iolas, and tender protestations from Demophoon. Iolas calls the young princes, and bids them embrace their deliverer. "Remember, says he, to these children, if ever you return into your native country, if ever you attain the glory, and the great possessions of your father, then remember that the Athenians were your faithful friends; and, in return for the signal benefits you have received, let it be your care to avoid

“ ever engaging in a war with a city which you are bound to love.
 “ It is but just that you should honour the Athenians, who have
 “ not scrupled to draw upon themselves the whole force of My-
 “ cene, to protect your helpless infancy; while in you they beheld
 “ nothing but the image of weakness, poverty, and exile. As
 “ for me, great prince, my gratitude shall not end with my life;
 “ but when I descend to the shades, I will tell Theseus how ge-
 “ nerously thou didst protect the children of Hercules.”

Demophoon, to shew that he will deserve these praises, deter-
 mines to assemble his troops, to send out spies, and to offer a sa-
 crifice, and consult the Gods. Mean time he invites his new guests
 into his palace; but Iolas refuses to quit the altar, till he knows the
 event of the battle, by which he intends to regulate his conduct.
 The interlude, sung by the Chorus, is nothing more than an ex-
 pression of sentiments very natural to the Athenian people, upon
 the subject of Euristhæus's injustice, the violence committed by his
 ambassador, and the revenge they hope for from the success of the
 battle.

A C T II.

Iolas is fluctuating between hope and fear, when he sees Demo-
 phoon return, with an expression of grief and perplexity painted
 on his countenance. As the unfortunate are ready to interpret
 every thing to their own disadvantage, he thinks himself undone;
 and asks the king several questions with an eagerness and anxiety
 that shew the excess of his apprehensions. “ What, says he, does
 “ this sadness, which I perceive in thy looks, presage? Art thou
 “ come to bring me news of the enemy's army? Is it, or is it
 “ not arrived? What hast thou to tell me? Alas! what the am-
 “ bassador said was but too true. The Gods declare in favour of
 “ his master: too well I know it by fatal experience; his insolent
 “ threats against Athens shew it plainly. But (adds he, fearing
 “ lest he should alarm the king) Jupiter can confound the pride
 “ of mortals.” These are strokes of antiquity: this is nature in her
 original simplicity.

Demophoon's answer is in the same spirit; for he does not at first
 endeavour to calm the fears of Iolas; on the contrary, he rather
 confirms them. “ The enemy's troops are come, says he: I
 “ have seen them myself; for it is not by the eyes of another
 “ that a warlike prince should see an enemy. However, the Ar-
 “ gives have not yet spread themselves over the plain. They
 “ have

“ have encamped upon a little hill, with an intention to watch
 “ our motions. It is their part to consider how and in what place
 “ they will attack us. I have given the necessary orders upon
 “ this occasion. The whole city is in arms, the victims are pre-
 “ pared, and our priests are employed in making expiations round
 “ our walls: expiations favourable to us, and fatal to the enemy.
 “ I have assembled the priests, and caused our oracles to be con-
 “ sulted. Opinions are divided upon many articles; but all
 “ agree in one point, which is, that I must sacrifice to Ceres
 “ a virgin born of an illustrious father. Thou seest with what
 “ ardor I have engaged in your interests; but I am a father and
 “ a king. I can neither sacrifice my own daughter, nor force any
 “ one of my subjects to sacrifice his. I will not conceal from
 “ thee the murmurs which this declaration has excited among the
 “ people. The city is divided. There are citizens who acknow-
 “ ledge, that we are in justice obliged to defend suppliants: there are
 “ others who begin to accuse me of imprudence and temerity.
 “ Things are brought to such a point, that if this sacrifice must
 “ be made at the expence of the state, a civil war is the certain
 “ consequence. It is thy part to consider upon some way to se-
 “ cure thy own safety, and my honour. It is fit thou should’st
 “ be succoured; but not by exposing me to the hatred of my
 “ people: for I am not such a tyrant as those who rule over bar-
 “ barians. My power is regulated not by my own will, but
 “ justice.”

“ Ah! my dear princes, says Iolas, addressing himself to the
 “ children of Hercules, our fate is like that of a vessel which has
 “ escaped the fury of a tempest at sea, to be wrecked within the
 “ port. Why, alas! have we listened to the seducer, hope? But
 “ it is not Demophoon we ought to reproach: can he be blamed
 “ for sparing the blood of his people? He is no less our bene-
 “ factor than before; and I will never be ungrateful. But aban-
 “ doned by all, how shall I resolve? What Gods have we not
 “ implored? What assistance have we not vainly sought? - Alas!
 “ our fate is inevitable, my children; we must resolve to deliver
 “ ourselves up to the rage of our enemies. To me death has no-
 “ thing in it terrible, if it be not, that my death will afford a
 “ malignant triumph to my adversaries. But, ah! what most
 “ affects me is your fate, my children, and that of Alcmena;
 “ too miserable, alas! in having survived her son. How fruitless
 “ have been all my cares to preserve you? Ah! it would have

"been better to have died at once by the hands of our enemies.
 "But, great prince, it is still in thy power to save these illustrious
 "children: deliver me up to the Argives for them. Thus wilt
 "thou preserve them, and hinder thy dominions from being
 "engaged in a war. As for me I value not life; and Euristhæus
 "desires nothing so ardently as to have the faithful companion of
 "Hercules in his power."

I shall pass over the observations made by the Chorus in these intervals, because they are better in the exhibition than in the reading. Demophoon, who saw plainly that the hope of saving the unhappy family of Hercules had suggested to Iolas this expedient, so little fit to be complied with, tells him, that, indeed, his offer is noble, and worthy of his great heart; but that Euristhæus is not so impolitic as to be content with shedding the blood of Alcide's friend: that the king of Argos is apprehensive of what the children of Hercules, when they have attained to maturity, may undertake in revenge of their father; and that it is to prevent this danger he seeks their lives. He concludes with saying, that Iolas must think of some expedient to remove their perplexity; and that as for him he knows not what to propose. It would, indeed, have been very indecent to have proposed the death of one of the daughters of Hercules: besides, Iolas ought to have known that the Oracles concerned them only.

Iolas, being left alone, abandons himself to grief: his complaints bring Macaria, one of Alcide's daughters, out of the temple. She enters with that modest reserve which we have so often had occasion to mention as the characteristic of the Grecian women. She begins with apologising for her freedom in appearing publicly. It was the cries of Iolas, she says, and her anxiety concerning the fate of her brothers, that induced her to shew herself. Iolas tells her in few words the situation of their affairs, and the distress occasioned by the Gods demanding a noble victim.

Macaria immediately asks whether their safety depended upon this alone?

IOLAS. It does: for in every thing else the Gods are favourable to us.

MACARIA *. Well, no longer fear the Argive army then. Behold the victim: I am she. I will voluntarily deliver myself to death,

* Macaria here offers herself to die. Euripides has taken this episode, as well as the rest, from the antient traditions, of which Pausanias (in Atticis) speaks thus: "There is

death, and spare thee the grief and perplexity of determining thy choice. Nothing can be more just than that the daughter of Hercules should die for her family. What would be said of us should we, ungrateful fugitives, be afraid of death, while a whole people expose themselves to danger only for our preservation? What infamy to our name should the children of Hercules, whose miseries force them to take refuge at Athens, be base enough to fear death! How unjust, should Athens be vanquished after having furnished the victim, while we escape the hands of our enemies! I would not have my family, if compelled again to fly, be destitute of another asylum. How dishonourable to me to hear these words: "Why dost thou come hither with thy suppliant branches?" "Begone; we will not involve ourselves in thy misfortunes and thy cowardice. Compassion is not due to thee, who meanly fears to die." Were I to preserve my life at the expence of my brother's safety, could I hope for happiness? I should have the lot of all who act in this manner. Could I expect an honourable marriage? What prince would chuse to unite his destiny with mine? thou say'st, I merit a better fate. Were I any other than the daughter of Hercules, I might, perhaps, act differently; but I know too well what that glorious title obliges me to. Lead me to the altar: crown me as a victim; and be conquerors. This is my wish, my glory; and I declare, that I die voluntarily to save my brothers. Could I have formed a design more honourable!

IOLAS. O worthy daughter of Hercules! His divine spirit animates thy breast, as his blood flows in thy veins. I can neither blame nor consent to thy resolution; but I have thought of an expedient more just. Call hither thy sisters, and let the victim be chosen by lot.

MACARIA. Why dost thou propose the lot? If chance is to determine which of us is to die, death will no longer be volun-

" is still at Marathon a fountain called Ma-
" caria, concerning which this story is re-
" lated. Hercules flying from Tirynthe, to
" avoid the fury of Euristhæus, took refuge
" in Trachine, whose king, Ceyx, was his
" friend. After the death of Hercules, Eu-
" risthæus endeavoured to get the children
" of this hero into his power. Ceyx, not
" thinking himself able to defend them,
" sent them to Theseus. The suppliants
" were received at Athens. Euristhæus de-

" manded them; and Theseus refused to
" deliver them. Hereupon the Pelepon-
" nesians made war upon the Athenians:
" and the Oracle having declared, that the
" Athenians could not have the victory un-
" less one of the children of Hercules be-
" came a voluntary victim, Macaria, the
" daughter of Alcides and Deianira, devo-
" ted herself for the rest. By her death she
" procured victory to the Athenians, and
" gave her name to the fountain.

tary,

tarily, and the victim is robbed of her reward. I offer myself to be sacrificed; accept me, if thou think'st proper: if thou wilt allow death to be my choice, I am ready to suffer it; but I will not yield to the award of chance.

IOLAS. O Gods! how noble are these sentiments! Too generous princess, I see plainly thou wilt preserve thy brothers by the sacrifice of thy own life: but I dare not confirm, nor attempt to alter this resolution.

MACARIA. This silence in thee is prudent, and I understand it as a consent. Be not apprehensive that my death will be charged upon thee. Freely, and even with joy, I fly to the altar. All I desire is, that thou wilt follow me thither, that I may die in thy arms. It belongs to thee to adorn me for the funeral pomp, since I offer myself for a victim, that I may not dishonour the hero to whom I owe my birth.

IOLAS. No, daughter, I cannot, I will not behold thy death.

MACARIA. Order it so then that some women may be present, and receive my last breath.

IOLAS. Go then, unfortunate princess; thy desires shall be satisfied. I should be the most unworthy of mortals did I not engage myself to see that thy funeral pomp is suitable to the greatness of thy courage. O Macaria! O most unhappy princess, was ever fate like thine? At least acquaint me with thy last commands.

MACARIA. Receive then, sage old man, my last farewell. Let it be thy care to make my brothers equal thee in wisdom and in virtue; and then they cannot be unhappy. Live, and provide for their safety, by securing thy own. They are thy children. Thou hast been a father to them; and it is for them I die. And you, my dear brothers, may you be happier than your sister; may my death procure you a felicity equal to my wishes. Honour Iolas, Alcmena, and the Athenians. If possible, let your gratitude equal the benefits you have received from them: and if the Gods, in compassion to your sufferings, should one day establish you happily in your native country, then remember what funeral honours your sister merits to receive from you, who sacrificed herself to procure your safety. The monuments with which you honour my shade, shall, to me, be instead of a husband and children, if the dead are capable of tasting any satisfaction. For, alas! since destined to die, if we should be still miserable after death, how wretched is the condition of mortals, when the grave is considered as the only asylum for the unhappy!

IOLAS.

IOLAS. Doubt not, noble virgin, but thy fame will live for ever. It shall be our care to immortalise it. Adieu, I will speak to thee no more: I must not by a longer discourse profane a victim consecrated to Proserpine *.

[Here Macaria goes off the stage, and Iolas continues to speak.]

O, my dear children, I faint; what violence have I done myself to part with her? Support me: cover my eyes with my robe, and leave me to indulge my sorrow. Cruel necessity! I have delivered up your sister to death, but it is to preserve you.

The Chorus enter into a conversation upon what had so lately passed before them: a sufficient matter for reflection, especially to the Greeks, who attribute all human events to destiny. They endeavour to comfort Iolas, by the consideration of the glory Macaria will acquire by an action so heroic.

A C T III.

A slave enters, and asks for Iolas and Alcmena. He does not perceive that the former lies prostrate upon the ground, and knows not that the latter is in the temple. Iolas, attentive to the least motion, as still expecting to hear of new misfortunes, raises himself up, and answers the slave, who expresses his astonishment at seeing this venerable old man plunged in such an excess of sorrow. In vain does he endeavour to find out the cause. Iolas will not own that it is the sacrifice of Macaria. He even affects to conceal his anguish, ascribes it to general causes, and eludes the questions put to him by the messenger. This probably is contrived to conceal the death of the princess, and to justify her not being mentioned in this and the two following acts; for there is not a word more said concerning her. And it must be acknowledged, that this silence is very surprising: no reason can possibly be assigned for it. Alcmena, indeed, is supposed to be now ignorant of this event; but can she be ignorant of it till the end of the play? The difficulty is very great; but whether it be a fault or not, the slave knows as little as Alcmena of the occasion of Iolas's grief.

* These last words are very remarkable. They sufficiently prove what I have said concerning Achilles (in the Iphigenia in Aulis) as he suffers his mistress to die, because she was consecrated to Pluto. Achilles acts the same part as Iolas here. He is grieved; but he must obey, and respect a voluntary consecration.

This messenger makes himself known for a domestic of Hyllus, the eldest son of Hercules; and he is come, he says, to bring them happy news. This induces Iolas to send and intreat Alcmena to come out of the temple, that he may remove her fears concerning Hyllus. She comes out, but full of apprehensions upon account of those cries she had heard: so ready are the unfortunate to suspect every thing! She imagines, that in this slave she sees a new messenger from Euristhæus, who is preparing to force away her grandsons. Being undeceived, she learns, that Hyllus is returned from the neighbouring countries, whither he went to solicit aid, at the head of an army which he had found means to assemble. This army, the courier tells her, has joined the Athenian troops; and the victims are already prepared. These few words are very remarkable, and justify the silence of the actors upon the fate of Macaria. The slave knows not that it is the princess who is going to be sacrificed; he cannot, therefore, inform Alcmena of it. But why is Alcmena so anxious for Hyllus? Has she no concern about her grand-daughter, who had been from her for some time, and does not return? Probably she supposes this young princess is not far off, and has no suspicion of her having devoted herself for her brothers.

However this may be, as the slave is preparing to return to his master, Iolas declares he will accompany him, and partake the dangers of the battle. Alcmena, and the rest, endeavour to dissuade him from this resolution, on account of his extreme age, but in vain. Iolas orders his armour, which is hung up in the temple, to be brought him: but Alcmena makes use of another motive to detain him. "Would you, says she, leave me, and these children, unprotected?"

IOLAS. It is my duty to fight, and thine to protect them.

ALCMENA. What will become of us, should'st thou be slain?

IOLAS. Thou wilt hold the place of a mother to those who survive me.

ALCMENA. Ah, if fortune should declare against us!

IOLAS. Fear nothing. The Athenians will not deliver you up to Euristhæus.

ALCMENA. This then is the only hope you leave me.

Iolas assures the queen, that Jupiter, who was formerly her lover, will watch over her safety; and that it would be a crime in her to doubt of his protection. It is a kind of enthusiasm with which he is seized, and which forces him to engage in the combat.

The

The slave returns with the necessary armour for the old man, but he warns him that he will not have leisure to arm but in the field of battle, because the enemy are eager for the fight, and that it is time to meet them. Iolas yields to this argument, but he is so enfeebled by age, that the slave is obliged to support him as he goes to the field. This is to prepare us for the miracle in the catastrophe. Iolas retires with a wish like that of Evander in Virgil:

*O mibi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos,
Qualis eram, &c.*

The Chorus conclude this act with some petitions to Jupiter and Minerva for the success of the battle. They sing a hymn as usual, with the same ceremonies. It is plain, that this act is contrived only to give probability to the ensuing battle; the preparations for which required some interval of time.

A C T IV.

The same domestick comes eagerly to inform Alcmena of the success of the battle. "We are conquerors, cries he, and already we begin to erect trophies of our victory." Alcmena, transported with joy, promises to give the slave his liberty for bringing her such happy news. She then enquires into the circumstances of the fight, but her curiosity turns particularly upon Iolas. "I have wonders to tell thee concerning him, answers the slave. Both armies were ranged in order of battle, when Hyllus alighting from his chariot, advanced towards Euristhæus: Why, says he, to him, dost thou expose the lives of so many brave soldiers in thy particular quarrel? Mycene will not lose much by the death of one warrior only. Let thee and I decide our difference by single combat. Either thou shalt lead away to captivity the children of Hercules, or I and they shall enjoy the honours and territories of our father. The Argives consented to this proposal, which they thought worthy the courage of Hyllus; but the cowardly Euristhæus refused to comply with it, though he did not blush to hazard the lives of princes far braver than himself. Hyllus, weary of expecting him, was obliged to retire among his troops; the victim was sacrificed, and from the streaming blood, the priests presaged victory to the Athenians. The warriors instantly

Vol. III. F mounted

“ mounted on their chariots, they covered themselves with their
“ bucklers.”

It must be observed here, that the slave does not say who was the victim, he only gives Alcmena to understand, that it was a human victim; and the audience cannot but know that this is Macaria: but as the victim is said to be at some distance from the army, the slave might not know it was this princess, and only Iolas and the Chorus might be in the secret. It is certain, that if Alcmena had known any thing of it, Euripides would be highly to blame to shew her so insensible, and it is not easy to conceive, why a sacrifice so interesting, should be the subject only of one act, and no mention made of it afterwards.

“ The king of Athens, continues the slave, harrangued his subjects, like a king: Citizens, said he to them, it is your duty to defend the country in which you were born. Euristhæus also encouraged his troops. At the sound of the Tyrrhenian trumpets, the two armies engaged in fight, the air resounded with confused cries and the clashing of shields. The first shock made the Athenians lose ground, but presently afterwards the Argives gave way: The battle now began to rage, they fought man to man. The slaughter was great on both sides, and nothing was to be heard but cries like these: *revenge Athens, revenge Argos.* At length, after repeated efforts, we put the Enemy to flight. Iolas then perceiving that Hyllus exposed his person out of his rank, called to him with a loud cry, to take him into his chariot. Iolas, as soon as seated there, snatches the reins, and pushes on the horses directly towards Euristhæus. Others, oh queen! may repeat to thee what they hear from publick report; but what I now tell thee, these eyes were witnesses of. As Iolas passed by Pallene, a place consecrated to Minerva, he perceived the king of Argos in his chariot: when instantly invoking Jupiter and the goddess Hebe, he implored them to restore to him his youth for one day, that he might revenge the great Alcides. When, wonderful to relate! two stars were immediately seen to stop over the chariot of Hyllus, and covered it with a thick cloud. These (say the augurs) were Hercules himself, and his wife Hebe. The cloud dispersed, and Iolas was seen to come out under the form of a young man, full of fire and vigour. He flew after Euristhæus. He came up with him at the rocks of Sciron. He seized him in his chariot, and binding his hands, he led captive this prince, once so haughty, and in
I
“ appear-

" appearance so happy, as if to teach mortals to fear the reverses of fortune, and to pronounce no man happy till after his death."

The Chorus and the mother of Hercules, full of joy for so complete a victory, return thanks to Jupiter. Alcmena especially, who in her misfortunes had accused this Deity of being slow to succour her whom he had once loved, thanks him for her liberty recovered, though late, as Tytirus in Virgil :

Libertas quæ fera tamen respexit inertem.

She asks the slave, why Iolas did not kill the common enemy. He answers, that it was through respect to her, he spared him, that he might present him to her alive ; and through hatred to Euristhæus, to whom this disgrace would be more shocking than immediate death. The slave having received his liberty from the queen, according to her promise, departs very well satisfied ; and the Chorus fill up the remainder of the act, by declaring their joy for the good fortune of their new guests, for the apotheosis of Hercules, and the fall of the haughty Euristhæus.

A C T V.

An officer leads in Euristhæus loaded with chains. He is sent by Hyllus and Iolas to Alcmena, to be disposed of, as her just hatred and revenge shall suggest. There is in this act nothing which can be thought interesting now. It was written for Athens, as well as the whole piece, in which this republick is greatly flattered. The subject of it is as follows.

Alcmena, after bitterly reproaching Euristhæus with his crimes, condemns him to death ; but the Athenian Chorus oppose this sentence, because it was contrary to the custom of Athens, to put a prisoner of war to death in cold blood, a custom truly conformable to humanity.

It was natural for the queen, according to the principles of the Pagans, to doom her most cruel enemy, who was now in her power, to death : but according to the laws of the state, Euristhæus ought as a captive to be spared. Upon this occasion a dispute arises between Alcmena and the Chorus, and Euristhæus makes an artful speech in his own favour. He protests, that he does not fear death, and that he would not save his life at the expence of his honour ; but that if he undertakes to defend himself, it is, because he would not leave an infamous name behind him. It is to Juno,

he says, and not to him, that his hatred to Hércules and his children ought to be imputed. In this manner, the ancients usually justified themselves. Destiny or the Gods were the authors of all the crimes that were committed by mortals. Helena makes the same excuse for herself in the tragedy of the Trojan Captives; and Phædra in that of Hyppolitus. But it is plain, that these same ancients did not admit of such a justification; for although Euristhæus concludes, with reason enough, that having been so unfortunate, as not to fall in battle, as he wished, he is, by the custom of the Athenians, secured from punishment: yet Alcmena persists in condemning him to death, while the Chorus are as obstinate to save him. At length, the queen hits upon an expedient to gratify her own revenge, without offering any offence to the Athenians. "Let him be put to death, says she, and I will restore his body to the Argives." Euristhæus sullenly submits to this sentence, and by a stroke of prophetick anguish, he declares to the Athenians, that they need only suffer Alcmena to indulge her fury, for that if he dies, they will bury him near the Minerva of Palene, that his tomb will be fatal to the Heraclidæ*, and honourable to the Athenians, whenever the posterity of Hercules, forgetful of the obligations they have received from Athens, should dare to take up arms against that city.

Speaking of Oedipus at Colona, we already have mentioned this fatality of tombs: the tragedy of the Heraclidæ interests only by this superstitious and poetical motive. Alcmena, more eager for vengeance, and but little moved with the menaces of Euristhæus, says to the Chorus, "Why, are you still irresolute, whether you shall sacrifice him or not, when the Fates promise you such great advantages from his death?" The Chorus now abandon the victim, convinced that the guilt of his blood will not fall upon Athens, and Euristhæus is led away to death.

It is not so necessary to observe here those things which must certainly shock a modern reader, as it is to remind him of what has been so often repeated, concerning the indispensable necessity of entering as much as possible into the ideas of the Athenians, when he reads their dramattick compositions.

* In this piece there is the same design, and probably the same allusions to interests of state, as in the Suppliants of Euripides, vol. II.

HELENA:

HELENA:

A

TRAGEDY OF EURIPIDES.

IT is not Helen in Troy, but Helen in Egypt, that is the subject of this tragedy. In order to explain this strange history, I must follow the prologue, in which Helena herself gives us the explanation; the rest is unfolded by degrees in each act.

This history, which is very confused, is related at length by Herodotus (Euterpe, or b. ii.) such as he had learned from the Egyptian priests. Euripides has added to it some fabulous narrations. I think, I cannot shew the difference between the historian and the poet better than by taking the extract which Mr. Rollin has given from this passage of Herodotus, in his excellent abridgment of *the ancient history of the Egyptians*, under the article of Proteus.

“ Proteus was of Memphis, where, in Herodotus’s time, his
“ temple was still standing, in which was a chapel dedicated
“ to Venus the Stranger. It is conjectured that this Venus
“ was Helen. For, in the reign of this monarch, Paris the Tro-
“ jan, returning home with Helen, whom he had stolen, was drove
“ by a storm into one of the Mouths of the Nile, called the Canopic;
“ and from thence was conducted to Proteus at Memphis, who re-
“ proached him in the strongest terms for his base perfidy and
“ guilt, in stealing the wife of his host, and with her all the ef-
“ fects in his house. He added, that the only reason why he did
“ not punish him with death (as his crime deserved) was, because
“ the Egyptians did not care to imbrue their hands in the blood of
“ strangers: that he would keep Helen with all the riches that he
“ brought with her, in order to restore them to their owner:
“ that as for himself (Paris) he must either quit his dominions in
“ three days, or expect to be treated as an enemy. The king’s
“ order was obeyed. Paris continued his voyage, and arrived at
“ Troy, whither he was closely pursued by the Grecian army.
“ The Greeks summoned the Trojans to surrender Helen, and,
“ with

“ with her, all the treasures of which her husband had been
 “ plundered. The Trojans answered, that neither Helen, nor
 “ her treasures, were in their city. And indeed was it at all likely,
 “ says Herodotus, that Priam, who was so wise and old a prince,
 “ should chuse to see his children and country destroyed before
 “ his eyes, rather than give the Greeks the just and reasonable
 “ satisfaction they desired? But it was to no purpose for them to
 “ affirm with an oath, that Helen was not in the city; the Greeks,
 “ being firmly persuaded that they were trifled with, persisted
 “ obstinately in their unbelief. The deity, continues the same hi-
 “ storian, was resolved that the Trojans, by the total destruction
 “ of their city, should teach the affrighted world this lesson, *that*
 “ *great crimes are attended with as great and signal punishment from*
 “ *the offended Gods.* Menelaus, in his return from Troy, called
 “ at the court of king Proteus, who restored him Helen with all
 “ her treasure. Herodotus proves, from some passages in Homer,
 “ that the voyage of Paris to Egypt was not unknown to this
 “ poet*.

A C T I.

The scene represents a palace upon the bank of a river. Helena, who appears alone, gives us to understand, that this river is the Nile; that the place of her residence is the isle of Pharos†; that Proteus, a former king of Egypt, kept his court here; that he had married a neriad named Psamatha, after she had quitted Eolus; and that by this Goddess he had the prince Theoclymenus, now king of Egypt, and the princess Theonoe a prophetess, as her name signifies in Greek.

Helena also makes herself known for the daughter of Tyndarus and Leda. She even relates the history of Paris, but in a way somewhat different from the received fable. For there, after this shepherd had decreed the prize of beauty to Venus, he was promised Helena in marriage, and accordingly stole her from Menelaus, which occasioned the Trojan war. But here the case is quite altered: Helena protests, that it was not her who was carried away, but a phantom resembling her; that Juno, enraged to see the palm of beauty adjudged to Venus, resolved to deceive Paris by a false Helena. This deceit, says she, became fatal to Greece

* See the translation of Rollin's Ancient History, p. 76.

† Pharos, an island of Egypt, over against Alexandria.

and Phrygia. For there was not a Greek or Trojan who did not believe that Helen was in Troy; and many thousands of men fell victims to a ten years war; Troy became a prey to flames, and all Greece was overturned for a phantom*.

Helena, full of anguish for the miseries this error had occasioned, and the infamy it had brought upon her, which rendered her name execrable throughout the whole world, complains, that her unhappy life is still prolonged. But the God Mercury had promised her, that she should see her husband again, and be restored to his affection; this oracle supports her under her misfortunes: of which one of the most afflicting is the passion which the son of Proteus had conceived for her. As long as Proteus lived, he respected her virtue, but the son, less generous than his father, had deprived her of her liberty. He presses her to marry him, and it is to avoid this misfortune, and to preserve an inviolable fidelity to her husband, that she came to kneel before the tomb of Proteus, and to implore the shade of that prince to preserve her from the persecutions of his son Theoclymenus. None of the Greek poets ever represented Helena virtuous before. This second tradition concerning her, took its rise probably from the Lacedæmonians, who were interested to procure credit for this fable, that they might save the honour of Helen so decried throughout all Greece, and of Menelaus, who was mean enough to be reconciled to her, after he had recovered her from the Trojans. Such traditions as these, were of use to the drama, though it was well known how little they agreed with the truth of history. This with respect to the Athenians was the same as fable without restriction is to us.

While Helena is thus indulging her sorrow, a stranger arrives, and asks where the palace of Theoclymenus is. Then observing the queen, "O Gods! cries he, what object do I behold? Is this another Helena?" He is seized with the same indignation at the sight of her, as Eneas was, when he met her in the midst of Troy consuming in flames, and is only restrained from killing her by the respect he owes to a place in which he is a stranger. "Why, O stranger, says the queen to him, dost thou shew these marks of detestation? Am I criminal because I resemble the

* Plato, in the ninth book Of a Republic, compares men who eagerly pursue warm and transient enjoyments, to the Trojans, who (according to Stesichorus whom he quotes)

fought for the phantom Helen, believing it to be the true Helen, who was not in their possession.

"wife of Menelaus?" The stranger asks her pardon for this fallacy of rage: "But, adds he, the wife of Menelaus is so odious to all the Greeks, that thou oughtst to excuse this sudden emotion of hatred which it was not in my power to repress." Helena takes advantage of this opportunity to engage in a conversation with the unknown Greek. She speaks verse after verse, but does not, as Corneille* expresses it, *slap sentence upon sentence*.

He blames Seneca very justly for this affectation; but I am surprised that he should charge Euripides with the like, since in such sort of conversations this poet scarce ever introduces sentences; and it must be allowed, that when the scene is not too long, it is no fault for each actor to speak a single verse at a time, but rather a real beauty, since it then imitates the spirit and force of an interesting conversation; and Corneille has himself made too fine an use of this art, to have a right to condemn Euripides for it here.

Nothing can be more interesting than the conversation in this scene. Helena does not discover herself; but the stranger informs her, that he is a Grecian prince, banished from his country, and constrained to take refuge in Egypt. He is Teucer, the brother of Ajax; and he not only relates the history of his brother, who killed himself through indignation, because the armour of Achilles was not adjudged to him, but also the events that followed his death, his own banishment, and the whole history of Troy, which the true Helena was ignorant of.

As this princess does not make herself known to Teucer, she has the pleasure to hear him recount to herself the adventures of the false Helena. Teucer assures her that he saw her husband drag her ignominiously to the vessel which was to transport her to Greece; but declares that he knows not what is become of Menelaus, because the fleet was by contrary winds dispersed on the Egean sea. "It is the general report, adds he, that this prince is dead." Helena sighs at this news, but conceals her grief for fear of discovering herself. She learns also that Leda her mother had put an end to her life with her own hands, and that her two brothers, Castor and Pollux, after a like fate, were become demi-gods. At length Teucer declares that his intention by landing in Egypt was to consult the prophetess Theonoe, concerning

* See Observations upon *la Suivante*, a comedy, written by P. Corneille.

an expedition which he was preparing to undertake (for Apollo had commanded him to build another Salamis * at Cyprus). Helena wishes him success, but at the same time warns him to take advantage of the absence of Theoclymenus to depart instantly from Pharos, because the inhuman king sacrificed all the Greeks who landed upon that island.

Teucer thanks her for this important advice; and after wishing as much happiness to her, as miseries to the wife of Menelaus, he leaves her, and returns to his ship. Although Teucer appears no more throughout the whole piece, yet we shall find he is not altogether an useless person; he does not indeed contribute any thing himself to the principal action, but he informs Helena of many circumstances, which it was necessary she should know for the unravelling it.

The wife of Menelaus being now at liberty to give vent to her grief, utters the most moving complaints, and abandons herself to despair, which she expresses in tragic stanzas.

The Chorus, alarmed by her cries, hasten to comfort her. They are Grecian virgins, who had been taken by the Egyptian pirates; therefore the queen makes no difficulty of trusting them with her new afflictions. She tells them, that a Greek, who had landed at Pharos, had informed her of the calamities caused by the false Helena, and to which the true was a victim, namely, the overthrow of Troy, the death of Leda and her brothers, and the sad fate of her husband, who is supposed to have been swallowed up in the waves. The Chorus sympathize with her sorrows, and mingle their tears with those of this wretched princess, who has now lost all hope of ever returning to her native country. It was this hope alone that enabled her to support her captivity, and this gone, she will receive no consolation. It is by means of these affecting complaints that the reader is informed of the manner in which she was brought to Pharos. Mercury, by Juno's command, seized her while she was gathering roses, and transported her into Egypt.

The following are some of the complaints which she addresses to the Chorus: "My dear companions, what a fate is mine!

* Not that Cyprus which is in the Saronic Bay, and which we have mentioned elsewhere.

" Let no one be astonished at the prodigy * of my birth, my life
 " is a much greater prodigy. O beauty, frail and deceitful gift !
 " why dost thou not disappear as the fading colours of a picture ?
 " Thou art the cause that the Greeks forget my virtue, and think
 " only of crimes which I have never committed. Ah ! let the
 " unhappy compare their afflictions with mine, and they will
 " cease to murmur."

Here she enumerates all her misfortunes, among which those she feels most sensibly are her ruined fame, and the abhorrence in which her name is held throughout the world. This banishment to which the gods have doomed her, her abode in a barbarous country, the fatal consequences of her slavery, all join to afflict her. " One only hope remained, continues she, and hindered me from sinking under my calamities. It was, that I should one day behold my husband again, and find in him a deliverer. Alas ! this hope is vanished. My mother is no more, and it is I who am the cause of her death ; the innocent cause, indeed, but still no less unhappy. The dear pledge of my nuptials languishes in solitude, deprived of a mother's cares ; and no husband to protect her youth and innocence. Castor and Pollux no longer live, and, O ! to crown my miseries, I am dead to my country, and alive only to misfortune." Shall she return into Greece ? she says, what reception must she expect to find among the Greeks, since Menelaus, who only might be persuaded of her virtue, is among the dead ? Shall she resolve to espouse a barbarian ? Ah ! no, she will sooner die. Death then is her only resource, and she deliberates what kind of death she shall make choice of, that is, whether she shall die by the poniard, or the fatal knot. This last way of dying appears to her ignominious, even for slaves. And here we find, that notwithstanding the examples of Jocasta, Phædra, and Leda, there was some kind of infamy annexed to this method of putting an end to life. " But, resumes Helena, what matter is it how an unhappy wretch gets rid of life. Surely my misfortunes are excessive, since beauty, which makes the happiness of other women, has been my ruin."

* She came out of an egg, according to the fable, being the daughter of Leda by Jupiter, who transformed himself into a swan.

The principal person of the Chorus endeavours to console her by alledging, that it is not reasonable for her to believe that her husband is dead, upon a bare report only. Anxiety and sorrow, she tells her, are credulous; that she ought to distrust herself upon such an occasion, and that it would be better to consult Theonoe concerning the fate of her husband, than to listen to her own fears. "From Theonoe, continues the confidant, nothing is hid; and when thou art by her informed of thy fate, thou mayst with certainty indulge thy grief or joy. Why should mortals anticipate their woes? Take my advice, princess, quit this tomb, and seek the prophets. If thou remainest here, how wilt thou be able to remove these doubts? Why art thou still irresolute? Enter the palace, I conjure thee: I will not leave thee, I will myself be witness to the oracles she will deliver to thee; it suits with the tenderness of our sex to interest ourselves in each other's misfortunes."

HELENA. Well then, my dear friends, since you will have it so, I will retire; come with me into the palace, and hear the misfortunes that will be predicted to me.

CHORUS. We are ready to attend thee.

HELENA. Alas! what dreadful sentence am I going to hear!

CHORUS. What satisfaction canst thou find in thus anticipating thy woes?

HELENA. O Menelaus! O my husband! what is become of thee? Dreadful uncertainty! Does he still behold the day, or is he an inhabitant of the regions of the dead?

CHORUS. Always hope well of the future.

HELENA. Alas! in vain have I, with tears, conjured the river Eurotas to let me know the fate of my husband; and what satisfaction have I received! Ah! it is too plain, I am destined to cut short the thread of my miserable days. I was a victim devoted to the shades from the time that Paris became intoxicated with these fatal charms. It is decreed that I must sacrifice myself.

CHORUS. Mayst thou be happy, and may all these fatal presages fall on others.

HELENA. O wretched Troy, to me thou owest thy destruction! how many tears, how much blood has Venus caused to be shed on my account! What horrors! What slaughter! Mothers have beheld their sons expire, and weeping virgins have carried their offerings to the borders of Scamander, to lay upon the tombs

of their brothers. The air resounded with the cries of mourning Greece; she beat her bosom, and her bloody visage bore the marks of her despair.

These probably are the strokes which madam Dacier calls the language of our prophets. Without doubt, they are those of nature, which is finely expressed in the complaints of Helena, and in the lively picture she draws of Troy's misfortunes and her own.

A C T II.

Helena is now in the palace with the whole Chorus, which is well contrived by the poet to introduce Menelaus alone, and to protract the meeting between Helena and her husband. Accordingly a Greek enters in a very miserable equipage*, who, by deploring his misfortunes, makes himself known for Menelaus. He wishes that Pelops, after the fatal feast he made for the gods, had not given birth to Atreus, to whom he owed his being. "Alas!" says he, while the wrecks of Greece, and the poor remnant of Troy are carrying elsewhere the names and memory of those who have perished in this fatal war, unhappy I wander from sea to sea, and cannot obtain of the gods a safe return into my native country, the end of all my wishes! I have sailed near all the shores of Lybia†, and when I approach Greece, a contrary wind always drives me far from it; and, to increase my distresses, I have been shipwrecked on this unknown shore. I have lost almost all my companions, and have with great difficulty saved myself upon the floating wrecks of my vessel, with Helena, whom I had recovered from the Trojans."

Menelaus knows not yet upon what country the tempest has cast him. The shame and confusion he feels on account of his wife's infamous conduct, had made him take bye-paths in order to avoid shewing himself. However, he is obliged to seek some food as well for himself as for Helena and his companions, under whose guard he says he had left her in a grotto. He, therefore, knocks at the gate of the palace; an old woman who opens it, chides him severely at first. His miserable dress, and his being a Greek, are the causes of this coarse usage. This scene begins with a

* With regard to this character, and some others, which Euripides affected to exhibit in mean dresses, see Aristophanes, in the third part.

† Lybia, a considerable part of Africa, has received its name, it is said, of Lybia daughter to Epaphus. All Africa was called Lybia by the Greeks.

dispute between Menelaus and the slave; a circumstance which appeared very natural to the Athenians, but which we would think below the dignity of tragedy. However, it is by this dispute that Menelaus learns he is in Egypt, and that there is a Greek princess in the palace named Helena. The perplexity of Menelaus here is very interesting, for this name awakens his curiosity. The old woman answers his questions so exactly, that he knows not what to think. She tells him, that this princess is the daughter of Tyndarus, and descended from Jupiter; that Sparta is her native country; and that she was in Egypt before the war of Troy. At length, she insists upon his departing immediately; and this, not so much through want of humanity, but because the king of Egypt put to death all the Greeks who landed in Pharos.

Menelaus, extremely surprised, as may be supposed, at so uncommon an adventure, makes reflexions on it as soon as he is alone. He is sure that but a few moments before he left his wife in a grotto, and he now hears she is in this palace. "Can there, says he, be two Jupiters, two Tyndarus's, and two Helenas?" This conformity of names seems to him to be possible, though very extraordinary; but the thing itself is incredible. He is not terrified by the account he had received of the cruelty of the Egyptian king, which he cannot believe he will carry so far as to sacrifice him: "The fate of Troy, says he, is too well known, and the name of Menelaus, who kindled those flames by which she was consumed, is famous in every country."

*Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris? **

Secure in his own dignity, he resolves to wait the arrival of Theoclymenus, and if he finds him as barbarous as he is reported to be, he may at least contrive some way to escape.

The Chorus come out of the palace with Helena, and, in general terms, relate the oracle delivered by Theonoe, who plainly declared that Menelaus is not dead, but that he is not yet returned to his kingdom. Helena, reflecting upon this oracle, adds, "Theonoe assured me, that Menelaus will return to Sparta, when his misfortunes are at an end; but she did not say that he will arrive there in health and security; and in my transport at hearing my husband was alive, I forgot that circumstance. He has

* *Æneid*, lib. x. v. 460.

"suffered

“suffered shipwreck, she says, upon a neighbouring shore. O!
“my dear Menelaus, haste thee to my wishes.” This tender anxiety, concerning the oracle, is very natural, and expresses the character of another Andromache. Helena, as she finishes these words, advances towards the tomb of Proteus: for this tomb, she says, is her altar, her sanctuary, and the witness of her fidelity to Menelaus; since she has put her virtue under the protection of the father, to guard her against the importunity of the son.

But in approaching this sacred place, she perceives a man following her. This is Menelaus, in a dress very likely to hinder him from being known by Helena. She flies, supposing him to be a ravisher who is come with intent to carry her away. Menelaus endeavours in vain to detain her. The astonishment that appears upon his countenance at the sight of his wife, confirms her in the suspicions she had conceived of the bad designs of this man, whom terror, joined to the alteration a long absence had made in him, together with his wretched appearance, hindered her from knowing. She cries out, she calls for assistance; in vain does Menelaus protest that he is no ravisher, and that he only desires to speak one word to her: she runs from him; he stops, and she escapes, nor thinks herself in safety till she has reached the tomb of Proteus.

The scene now becomes very agreeable. For Helena and Menelaus, recovered from their first disorder, gaze on each other with more attention and surprize. One discovers the features of Menelaus, and the other those of Helena, which gives room for a situation like that of Amphytrion. But the sentiments occasioned in each by this discovery, are very different. Helena, transported with joy, flies to embrace her husband. “I thy husband!” exclaims Menelaus. The more proofs she brings, the less is he convinced; he cannot believe it possible that there should be two Helenas, and he fancies himself imposed upon by a dream. But the true Helena explains the enigma to him, by assuring him that she whom he kept concealed in a grotto, she whom Paris carried away from him, and who was the cause of so many calamities to Greece, was only a phantom formed of air, in a word, a false Helena; whereas she who now spoke to him, had been faithful to her husband in the heart of Egypt. Menelaus is not satisfied with this strange account. So many prodigies surprize, but cannot convince him. He even appears enraged, and resolves to retire, that he may avoid the image of a wife whom
he

he hates, and whom he is determined to sacrifice to his just revenge. In vain does Helena strive to retain him with prayers and tears; she exclaims in much the same manner as Inachus, when he found his daughter transformed into a heifer:

*Tu ne es quæsitæ per omnes
Nata, mihi terras? tu non inventa reperta
Luctus eras levior. **

“Is it thou, daughter, (says Inachus) whom I see again, after having sought thee in vain in so many different places? Ah! it were better I had never found thee, than to find thee thus.”
“What, Menelaus! says Helena, have I then found my husband again, to lose him for ever?”

Fortunately for her and for Menelaus, a Grecian slave comes from the grotto, crying out, *A prodigy!* and accordingly he relates a most surprising one; but keeps the king a while in suspense by telling him, that the Greeks have in vain exhausted all their rage upon unhappy Troy, since there is no longer a Helena for Menelaus, she vanished into the air, after pronouncing these words, “Ye Greeks and Phrygians who perished for me upon the shores of Scamander, how do I pity your illusion! Juno deceived you. You believed that Helena was in the power of Paris: he never possessed her. As for me, my destiny is accomplished, I dissolve again into the air of which I was formed; but learn that Helena is innocent.”

Here the officer perceives Helena, whom his eagerness to relate this prodigy to Menelaus, and the queen’s situation upon the stage, hindered him at first from seeing: “What, cries he, do I behold thee here, and have just told the king that thou wert no more! Well then, it shall no longer be said that all our sufferings to recover thee from the Trojans have been fruitless.”

Menelaus, fully convinced by the report of the officer, so conformable to the account given him by Helena, yields to the evidence of this supposed miracle. Such a subject as this would certainly on our stage become comick.

Even the Greek poet slightly passing over a matter so delicate, employs part of this scene, in expressing the mutual tenderness which is the consequence of this discovery, and in satisfying the curiosity of Menelaus, concerning the manner in which Helena

* Ovid. Met. lib. i. v. 653.

had been brought into Egypt. The officer also enters into this conversation, and we find both by what Menelaus and he say, that the virtue of Helena has entirely dissipated the clouds which obscured it.

All things now contribute to give a new lustre to that virtue, all the tenderness of Menelaus for her revives, and the officer again pays his homage as if her marriage with Menelaus was celebrated once more. "I imagine, says this slave, that I again bear the nuptial torch upon the chariot in which you were both conducted to Mycene." He is impatient to acquaint his companions, who remained near the shore, with this news, and he delays only to treat the oracles delivered by priests in a very cavalier manner. To him divination by fire and the flights of birds, is folly; and, what is very singular, he endeavours to prove this in form. "Calchas, says he, did not say to the Greeks, you are going to throw away your lives for a phantom; he had no such suspicion. Yet a whole state is destroyed; and let it not be said, for the sake of justifying him, that the Gods will not discover this illusion. Why then, I answer, should I consult the prophets? Let us implore blessings of the Gods, and quit the art of auspices, an invention calculated to indulge the curiosity of mortals, to encourage credulity, and to enrich those who practise it. The most certain augury * is that of reason and good sense."

But what is most surprising, the Chorus approve of this impiety, and Helena subscribes to it. We find that Jocasta in *Oedipus* † exclaims against oracles: this is not strange; she is punished for it, and the Chorus express their horror at the queen's impiety. But here it is very different. All are supposed virtuous, even Helena herself; a miracle is acted in her favour, and yet all join to condemn divination and diviners, without sparing even Calchas himself, who was the most celebrated amongst them. It is true, they oppose the testimony of the Gods to that of Calchas; but this great priest might have freed himself from this perplexity by saying with the officer, that the Gods have their secrets which they conceal from mortals. But to bring him and his art into contempt,

* It is easy to discover, by this passage, and several others, that Euripides was a philosopher, and a friend of Socrates. We shall see, in the third part, what advantage

Aristophanes made of this, in order to render him suspected.

† *Oedipus* of Sophocles, tom. i.

they deprive him of his resource. This would appear to be inconceivable, if we did not know that the Athenians, although superstitious, yet were great ralliers of their superstitions. Of this the *Clouds* of Aristophanes is a good proof, as we have already observed. We shall elsewhere give a solution of this problem.

After the departure of the officer, Helena, with a tender curiosity, conjures Menelaus, to tell her what misfortunes he has suffered, and in what manner he escaped the many dangers he was exposed to. The prince satisfies her in few words, upon which she exclaims: "Oh, how great have thy sufferings been; but alas! thou hast survived them only to meet death in this inhuman country." These words alarm Menelaus, and he questions Helena in his turn. She confirms the account the old woman had given him of the barbarous decree of Theoclymenus, that all the Greeks who through rashness or misfortune land in Pharos, should suffer death. She would have her husband preserve himself by flight. But this expedient seems unworthy both of him and her. Shall he, after finding her faithful, fly without her, and leave her at Pharos, exposed to the passion of a tyrant, who had solicited her to marry him? All that can be done is to keep himself concealed, till he can find some secure method of leaving the island with Helena. Here we see Menelaus in the same situation as Orestes, when discovered by his sister, in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*.*

The advice which Helen gives her husband, is to endeavour to gain to their interests the princess Theonoe; who, being a prophetess, cannot but know that Menelaus is in Pharos; she therefore must be prevailed upon not to discover his arrival to the tyrant, who is her brother. "But, says Menelaus, if she should refuse to keep our secret, what are we to do?" "There is no way then to escape, resumes Helena, thou wilt be murdered; and I shall be forced to become the wife of the tyrant." However, she protests she will stab herself with the same sword by which her husband dies. Menelaus also declares, that if he cannot preserve her, he will die; but assures her, that it shall cost the barbarian his life, before they are driven to such a fatal extremity. "Approach, cries he, approach ye vile, ye contemptible enemies! I will maintain that glory I acquired at Troy. It shall never be said, that the conqueror of Achilles, and he who beheld the death of Ajax, had not courage to expose himself to death for

* Vol. ii. act. IV. sc. 3.

“ his wife.” This character of Menelaus, is very different from that which is given him in the former tragedies. But it is not surprising that the poet should make a valiant Menelaus for a chaste Helena. If Euripides has been justly censured for giving too unfavourable a picture of this prince in his other plays, there is no room for such a charge against him in this; and to carry this observation still further, it is full as probable that when this tragedy was represented, Athens was upon good terms with Lacedæmon, as that the two Republicks were embroiled with each other, when those were acted in which Sparta and Menelaus are not spared.

Helena seeing Theonoe coming out of the palace, is seized with terror, “ We are undone, says she, fly I conjure thee. But how vain would be thy endeavours to conceal thyself? Theonoe although absent would see thee. Oh! my unhappy husband, the steel which spared thee in Troy, only waited to sacrifice thee in Pharos.”

A C T III.

The prophetess Theonoe is known by her grave and mysterious pace, and the solemnity of her words. She commands one of her women to go before her with a light to purify the air she breaths, and another to sweep the flame of a torch along her path, to take away all pollution from it, and orders that after she has pronounced her prayer, the sacred torch should be carried back to the palace.

“ Well, says she, perceiving Helena, what dost thou think of my oracles? Menelaus thy husband is with thee, but thou seest him again deprived of his ships, and of the false Helena. Unhappy prince, to what dangers hast thou been exposed, and now thou knowest not whether thou shalt return into thine own country, or terminate thy days in Egypt! The Gods are divided in their resolutions concerning thee, and Jupiter this day assembles the celestial council. Juno, who was once thine enemy, is now become favourable to thee, and is desirous that thou shouldst return into Greece, to undeceive the Greeks with regard to the conduct of Helena. But Venus opposes her will. She is afraid that it will be thought she received the prize of beauty, in favour of a venal marriage. However, thy fate is now in my power. I may chuse whether I will obey Juno or Venus; whether I will conceal thy arrival into this country from the king my brother, or whether I will deliver thee into his hands. He left me his commands, and I ought to obey them.”

Accordingly

Accordingly she seems resolved to send notice to Theoclymenus, that Menelaus is in Pharos. Helena, in the utmost consternation, falls at the feet of Theonoe: " O princess, says she, behold me
" prostrate before thee, upon this tomb which has served as an asy-
" lum to two unfortunate wretches. Alas! have I then found my
" husband again, only to see him murdered! Ah! do not, I con-
" jure thee, do not reveal a secret so fatal to us, and purchase not
" the kindness of an inhuman brother at the expence of thy own
" piety. Consider, princess, that the Gods, who hate injustice
" and cruelty, are willing that each one should enjoy his own,
" and not add to his possessions by violence and rapine. That
" abundance which is thus gained, is abominable in their eyes.
" The earth and air are common blessings which the Gods per-
" mit all to use; but they will not suffer that any one shall en-
" rich himself with impunity at the expence of the unhappy. It
" was by their orders, and O! to my misfortune, that Mercury
" transported me hither. I was confided to the king thy father,
" that he might restore me to my husband who would one day
" come to demand me. How can this duty be fulfilled, if Me-
" nelaus is put to death? Dost thou, O princess, respect the Gods,
" and the manes of thy father? Canst thou imagine, that they
" would have Egypt detain by force a pledge they trusted with
" her? No, certainly; therefore, it will be justice in thee rather
" to act conformable to the intentions of a virtuous father, than to
" serve the tyranny of a cruel brother. Ah! how unworthy would
" it be of a mind like thine, which is the repository of the secrets
" of heaven, to violate the orders of a father, in compliance with
" the will of a tyrant! To thee the deepest mysteries are dis-
" closed; the past, the present, and the future, are all open to
" thee, and canst thou be ignorant of the laws of justice? Let it
" be thy glory, princess, to deliver me from the miseries into
" which thou seest me plunged. The name of Helena is detested
" by all the world. The Greeks consider me as an unfaithful
" wife. Suffer my return to Sparta, that they may be undeceived.
" My presence alone will be sufficient to convince them, that it
" was not to me but to the quarrel between the two divinities
" they owed all their misfortunes. Thus wilt thou restore to
" me the honour, and the happiness I have lost. Through thee
" my daughter will be given in marriage, and all our distresses
" will have an end. Alas! if death had deprived me of Mene-
" laus far from hence, I should have lamented him as absent only;

“ but the Gods have restored him to me, and must I see him
 “ perish! O princess, hear my supplications! Spare me this most
 “ distracting spectacle! Shew thyself to be the worthy daughter
 “ of a father so just and good! Nothing can be more glorious for
 “ children than to inherit the virtue of their fathers.”

Theonoe acknowledges that Helena deserves compassion.
 “ But I would hear, adds she, what Menelaus has to say.” “ Ex-
 “ pect not from me, answers Menelaus, any base submissions;
 “ think not that I will fall at thy feet, and endeavour to move
 “ thee by supplications. No, princess; the laurels I have gathered
 “ at Troy shall never be stained with unmanly tears. Yet it is
 “ true, that tears are not unworthy of an hero thus oppressed;
 “ but my heart, accustomed to greatness, cannot submit to give
 “ the least tokens of fear or grief. If therefore, O Theonoe! the
 “ preserving an unfortunate prince, and restoring to him his wife,
 “ be an action worthy of thee, restore Helena to me, favour our
 “ escape. If not, accustomed to misery as I am, I shall not be
 “ unprepared to meet it; but thine will be the guilt. Yet, all
 “ that I can with honour do to move thee, I will. I will address
 “ myself to the manes of thy father. O wise and virtuous prince,
 “ whose cold ashes are shut up in this tomb, listen to my in-
 “ treaties: restore me my wife whom the Gods confided to thy
 “ care. But, O! since death has put it out of thy power to do
 “ me justice thyself, incline the heart of this princess thy daugh-
 “ ter to do it for thee. O suffer her not to dishonour her father!
 “ God of the subterranean regions, it is thee now whom I im-
 “ plore: how many victims have I sacrificed to thee for He-
 “ lena? Give them back, or grant that a princess, who seems to
 “ inherit a father's piety, may not withhold my wife from me.
 “ But, princess, if thus conjured, thou art fixed in thy re-
 “ solves not to restore Helena, know that I have bound myself
 “ by a solemn oath to dispute the possession of her with thy bro-
 “ ther at the price of my life. In a word, he must either kill,
 “ or be killed. If he refuses the proffered combat, and forces
 “ us by famine to quit this sacred sanctuary, Helena has likewise
 “ sworn to die; and I will draw the poniard from her bleeding
 “ bosom and plunge it in my own. Our mingled blood shall
 “ stream upon thy father's ashes, and his tomb shall be ours, an
 “ eternal monument of thy outrage to his memory, to thee an
 “ inexhaustible source of regret. Doubt it not, princess; Helena
 “ shall never be thy brother's, nor shall any other man possess her:

“ for

“ for if I do not carry her with me to Greece, she shall bear me
 “ company to the regions of the dead. Ah! does it become me
 “ thus to be moved? No; though unhappy, I am an hero still.
 “ My glory is dearer to me than life purchased by unmanly
 “ wailings. It is in thy power to give me death; but I will die
 “ with honour. Mean time I warn thee, princess, to regard thy
 “ own, and do us justice.”

The Chorus advise Theonoe to take care what sentence she pronounces; but this princess had taken her resolution before she heard the prayers and arguments of Helena and Menelaus, and it was only to try them that she pretended to be undetermined. Accordingly she promises to keep their secret, and not to deliver them up to Theoclymenus, which would in no degree wound her duty, since by this she performed, as far as it lay in her power, the engagement her father had entered into, and did her brother a real service by refusing to assist his barbarous designs. She advises Menelaus to endeavour to render Venus propitious to them; and retires to leave him at liberty to consult with Helena upon the means of escaping.

Their conference upon a matter of such moment and so difficult to be executed, is managed so as to shew the extreme perplexity they were in. Menelaus proposes an expedient, this is found impracticable; another is thought of, and with as little probability of succeeding. Shall he kill Theoclymenus? his sister will not permit it. Besides, how shall they escape without a ship? his whole fleet perished in the storm.

Helena is more happy in resources. She proposes to her husband to feign that he is dead; but as Menelaus does not perceive what use she intends to make of this stratagem, she by degrees explains her scheme, and thus anticipates the unravelling of the intrigue, which was only to be prepared. This is a fault which Euripides often falls into; however it is certain, that the project is so bold, and the execution of it so hazardous, that it still leaves the audience the pleasure of expectation.

The princess desires Menelaus to continue near the tomb of Proteus, which is a sacred sanctuary, while she goes to make those preparations for her intended project, which will be mentioned in the sequel. But before she returns to the palace, she invokes, with an ardent prayer, the assistance of Juno and Venus. Her address to Venus is singular enough: “ O Venus! cease to persecute her
 “ who procured thee the prize of beauty. Art thou not satisfied
 “ with..

“ with the miseries thou hast already inflicted on me, by giving
 “ a false Helena to the Trojans? If thou requirest my death, O
 “ grant at least, that I may expire in my native country! Art
 “ thou insatiable of woes? Still wilt thou inspire fatal passions,
 “ and delight in rage and horrors? Still must lawless love fill
 “ our unhappy house with carnage? Ah! if thou wert what
 “ thou oughtst to be, thou wouldst be the most amiable of
 “ Goddesses.”

The remainder of the scene is taken up with the songs of the Chorus. The Grecian women, moved by the misfortunes of Helena, and full of anxiety for themselves, wish to imitate the complaints of Philomela, that they might describe the miserable fate of Troy. Accordingly they draw a very lively picture of it, and go back as far as the judgment of Paris, which was the source of so many calamities. They recall to remembrance the fatal resentment of Nauplius, who, to take vengeance on the Greeks for the death of his son Palamedes, kindled fires upon the rocks of Eubœa to wreck their fleet; and they conclude with expressing their detestation of war, and such heroes as place their chief glory in making numbers wretched, under pretence of reconciling differences.

A C T IV.

This act is taken up with the execution of the plot formed by the artful Helena. Menelaus keeps himself concealed behind the tomb, and Theoclymenus arrives in a hunting equipage, followed by his attendants and his hounds. After having, as was his custom, saluted his father's tomb, he commands his servants to carry back to the palace the nets which they used in the chase, and to lead away his hounds: then, as if upon reflection, he blames himself for his too great indulgence to his officers, because, in his way, he has been informed that a Greek had landed in the island, unobserved by the sentinels. He supposes this Greek to be a spy, or perhaps sent to carry off Helena; and he has already caused some persons to go in search of him, that if he can be taken, he may be punished with death. But entering the monument, and not finding Helena there, “ Ah! cries he, the plot is already executed; Helena is not in her asylum, she is taken from me.” The passion he has for her, and his design to force her to marry him, make him resolve to pursue the ravisher himself. He calls his attendants,

attendants, and commands them to prepare a chariot for him ; but that instant Helena comes out of the palace.

Theoclymenus, satisfied to find that his fears were groundless, shews no other surprise than at the dress Helena appears in. For instead of wearing white robes as usual, she is now clad in a long mourning-garment, her head shaved, and her eyes bathed in tears. Her lover begs to know the cause of this new affliction. Is it, he asks, some ill-boding dream? or some fatal news from Sparta? " My sovereign, replies she, for this is the title which from hence-
" forwards I consent to give thee, I am overwhelmed with grief,
" I have no longer any hope remaining."

The counterfeited grief of Helena is discovered in one of those scenes of which I have made frequent mention, and which consists of questions and answers, interchanged in single verses. This is very pleasing, particularly upon account of the happy ambiguities with which the subject furnishes itself. For the artifice Helena makes use of consists in giving the king to know, by her feigned tears, and words interrupted with sighs, that her husband is dead ; she adds, that not only Theonoe had assured her of it, but a Greek, who had suffered shipwreck with him, had brought her the melancholy news. She makes Menelaus pass for this Greek, and presents him to the king.

His wretched habit, and the distressed condition he appears in, convinces Theoclymenus that he is a stranger cast by a storm upon his island. Helena here counterfeiting extreme affliction, cries out : " Alas ! I think I see my husband in this miserable state." Theoclymenus asks a great many questions concerning the death of Menelaus, apparently for fear of being imposed upon ; but Helena's answers are so plain and exact, and the snare is so well laid, that the king cannot avoid falling into it : his passion for her also making him readily believe what he so ardently wishes to be true, since it was this husband who was the obstacle Helena always opposed to the desires of the passionate prince. He asks the queen, whether the tomb of Proteus is to be henceforwards her dwelling-place? but Helena, without attempting to elude this new attack of her lover, at length declares plainly to him, that, being now free by the death of Menelaus, she consents to espouse him. " Let us forget the past, says she, and cease to suspect each other." She then asks one favour of Theoclymenus, which is to permit her to pay the last duties to the memory of Menelaus. This is the knot of the whole contrivance : for Theoclymenus, wholly ignorant

ignorant of the Grecian customs, believes every thing that Helena is pleased to tell him. Now she pretends, that her husband having been drowned, she must, according to the customs of the Greeks, go into a ship, and sail some distance from the shore, in order to pay him such funeral rites as suit with his unhappy death. The king, transported at his having, as he believes, overcome the obstinacy of Helena, permits her to do whatever she thinks proper, asks no questions, and offers to provide every thing for the funeral ceremony; and for that purpose enquires of Menelaus, what will be necessary; Menelaus tells him, they only want beasts for the sacrifices, beds, arms, and fruits.

The custom of presenting the dead with all things useful for life favours the design of Helena and Menelaus. One circumstance only gives the king some anxiety: what necessity is there for their sailing so far from the shore? Why, cannot this ceremony be performed without Helena? The answers he receives remove all these scruples. It is the wife's duty, they tell him, to be present at the funeral rites of her husband, and the ship must of necessity sail to some distance from the shore, lest the waves should throw back upon it the sacred remains of the sacrifice. Theoclymenus, charmed with the promise Helena had given to marry him, suffers himself to be imposed upon. He commands, that preparations should be made for the ceremony, and cloaths and food to be given to the Greek who brought him the happy news of Menelaus's death. He then leaves Helena at liberty to lament her former husband for the last time. "But, adds he, be comforted, princess, do not abandon thyself to useless grief: thy tears will not restore thy husband to thee." This one of our own poets has said:

*Pourquoi ces soins superflus,
Pourquoi ces cris, ces allarmes?
Ton époux ne t'entend plus.*

Menelaus also adds: "It is thy duty, princess, to love the husband who speaks to thee, and to forget the dead: this thy present situation requires of thee. If I am so happy as to see Greece again, I will clear thy honour which has been so unjustly traced, provided thy conduct to thy husband be such as it ought to be." Helena's answer is full of the same equivocal terms; Mean time the king, who is the dupe of them, enjoys the tender expressions

expressions in which he has no share. Afterwards they all return to the palace, except the Chorus, who sing an ode, which at first appears to be foreign to the subject, since it relates only to the rape of Proserpine, and to the misfortunes which the grief and resentment of Ceres brought upon mankind. In this, however, there is a delicate piece of art; for the Chorus not daring to reveal the intended flight of Helena, yet mention it in an allegorical manner, by repeating the adventure of Proserpine, who was carried away by Pluto.

A C T V.

Helena comes out of the palace to acquaint the Grecian women with the success of her scheme, and to conjure them to keep her secret faithfully till it is accomplished, that, by escaping happily herself, she may be able to procure their deliverance also. Theoclymenus enters afterwards with Menelaus, and some domestics loaded with all the necessaries which Helena had required, and he commands these men to follow and obey the stranger: but not being able to support the absence of Helena, he endeavours to dissuade her from attending the ceremony he had consented should be performed. He is afraid lest in the violence of her grief she should throw herself into the sea to attend the shade of her husband; and he is jealous of the tears she sheds for a man, who, although dead, he still considers as a rival.

Helena alleges the respect due to religion, and the sacred rights of a first marriage, which will not permit a virtuous woman from paying the last duties to a beloved husband. However, to remove the apprehensions of Theoclymenus, she promises him, that she will not abandon herself to her despair, and presses him to give orders for a ship to be in readiness to receive them. The king at last consents, and commands his attendants to provide the queen with a Phœnician galley of fifty oars, with directions to the rowers to obey the stranger. He then expresses an inclination to accompany Helena, and to be present at the ceremony; but she fortunately dissuades him from it. All these little difficulties which must be successively overcome, and which seem to overthrow the whole design, form the interest of the intrigue. Theoclymenus, after giving orders to make preparations for his marriage, conjures the Greek to bring back Helena to him as soon as possible, and taking leave of both, retires. Menelaus renews his prayers to heaven to

be propitious to them, and departs with his wife and his train : the Chorus fill up the remainder of the scene with songs, in which they form the most ardent wishes for Helena's safe return into her native country.

Although this interval is scarce long enough to give probability to what passes in the ship, yet a man comes, with an air of consternation and terror, to inform the king, that Helena is fled. It was Menelaus himself, he says, who carried her on board the galley the king had lent them. Theoclymenus cannot at first believe it possible, that one man should have effected this escape in spite of the opposition of so many Egyptians whom he had sent with them ; but the slave gives him a particular account of all that happened as follows :

“ As soon as Helena came out of the palace to go to the sea side, she began with feigned tears and sighs to lament the pretended death of Menelaus, who led her. When we arrived at the port, we caused a vessel of fifty oars to be unmoored, and made the necessary preparations for sailing. Some of us were employed in placing the rowers, others in spreading the sails, and in governing the helm : when immediately we perceived some men, who, notwithstanding their miserable dress, had a noble air ; these were the companions of Atreus's son. As soon as he perceived them, he cried out with feigned sorrow, Unhappy Greeks, have you then also suffered shipwreck ? but come and attend Helena, and assist us to pay the last honours to her husband who was swallowed up in the ocean. These Grecians, counterfeiting great affliction, entered the galley, having offerings for this sea sacrifice. All this appeared suspicious to us, and in secret we discoursed with each other concerning the unexpected coming of these Greeks in so great a number ; but, being commanded by thee to obey the stranger in all things, we durst not endeavour to penetrate into this mystery. It is most certain, O king ! that this misfortune is intirely owing to the orders thou gavest us to obey the stranger. And now every thing was carried on board the galley, except the bull which could not be forced into it. He bellowed horribly, and terrified us so much with his dreadful eyes and his horns with which he seemed to menace us, that none durst approach him. Menelaus perceiving this, cried out aloud : My dear companions ! you, by whom Troy has been overthrown, follow our Grecian customs, drag this victim by force into the galley, and
“ my

“ my sword shall sacrifice him. The Greeks immediately laid
“ hold of the victim, and forced him on a plank, so that Mene-
“ laus, partly by artifice, and partly by force, got him into the
“ ship. Nothing more being wanted, Helena seated herself
“ at the stern, Menelaus took his place near her, and the other
“ Greeks ranged themselves in lines on the right hand and the
“ left. All had poniards concealed under their robes, and at that
“ instant shouted aloud, doubtless to exhort each other to go on
“ with their enterprize. As we were now got to a considerable
“ distance from the coast of Pharos, the pilot asked, whether it
“ was necessary to sail any further? We are far enough for my
“ purpose, replied Menelaus. He then started up and ran to-
“ wards the prow with his sword drawn in his hand, and cut the
“ throat of the bull without mentioning the sacrifice to the dead,
“ but only uttered this prayer: O God of the Ocean, and you,
“ ye chaste daughters of Nereus, conduct me safely with my wife
“ to the Grecian shores. Mean time the blood of the victim
“ mingled among the waves, a favourable presage for the stranger.
“ Upon which one of us said to the Egyptian, who stood next
“ him: There is some fraud in this voyage, let us return back;
“ do thou take the command upon thee, and turn the helm. But
“ the son of Atreus, still reeking with the blood of the victim he
“ had sacrificed, thus spoke to his companions: Warriors of
“ Greece, why this delay? Massacre these barbarians, and throw
“ them into the sea. Our commander instantly cried out to us:
“ Seize, quickly seize this plank, take the oars, and cut these
“ perfidious strangers in pieces. All rise; some arm themselves
“ with poniards, others snatch up such weapons as chance pre-
“ sented them with, and a horrid fight ensued. Helena, from
“ the top of the stern, thus animated the Greeks: Remember
“ your exploits at Troy, repeat them here upon these barbarians.
“ In this mutual fury the conquered and the conquerors were
“ mingled and confounded, and many fell dead upon the deck.
“ Menelaus, like the general of an army, observed where his
“ succour was most wanted, and thither he flew; he dealt his
“ formidable strokes on every side, he overthrew all that opposed
“ him; and at length having tumbled all our sailors into the sea,
“ he seized the helm. It is to Greece, says he, that I intend to
“ go. They turned the sails, a favourable wind arose, and the
“ vessel was soon out of sight. As for me, rather than expose
“ myself to certain death on board, I had cast myself into the sea,
“ and

" and was taken up by some persons on the shore, from whence
 " I came to acquaint thee with this misfortune, and to tell thee,
 " that nothing is more necessary than a wife distrust."

Theoclymenus, thus doubly deceived as a lover and a king, resolves in the excess of his rage to take vengeance on his sister, for having thus betrayed the interests of his love, and of his crown. She is guilty in his eyes, because she did not reveal to him the arrival of Menelaus at Pharos. The Chorus, suitably to their office, endeavour to appease the king. " Ah! whither art thou going? " they cry, Whose blood is it thou resolvest to shed? " This produces a short but interesting debate between the king and the Chorus; but as it is not likely these captive women should be able to inspire the king with more reasonable sentiments, Euripides has recourse to a machine to unravel the whole intrigue. He very seasonably introduces the twin-gods, Castor and Pollux, one of whom undertakes to appease the king. He convinces him, that Theonoe is not to blame: he tells him, that it was the will of the Gods that Helena should be restored to her husband; and afterwards addressing his discourse to Helena, though absent, he assures her she shall arrive happily in Greece; and that, after her death, divine honours will be paid her; that she shall give her name to an island*; and that her husband Menelaus shall dwell for ever in the fortunate islands. To introduce this Athenian fable is the whole end of the piece, which confirms what we have oftener than once repeated, that the Greek poets almost always made choice of such subjects as were likely to sooth the pride of their countrymen, and that their tragedies were generally allegorical.

If we call to mind the subject of the Iphigenia in Tauris, we shall find that this tragedy nearly resembles it. In each there is a princess secretly transported out of her own country into a foreign kingdom. Iphigenia is carried to Scythia, Helena to Egypt. Here it is a husband, there a brother, both unknown, and ready to be sacrificed, who are discovered by a wife and sister. In both tragedies it is the women, whose genius more fruitful in expedients than men, that find means to escape from their captivity, and to deliver those who are dearest to them from the fury of two tyrants; and in both the Gods are introduced to wind up the catastrophe.

* The island of Helena is one of the Sporades of the promontory Sunium.

ION:

TRAGEDY WRITTEN BY EURIPIDES.

THE fable of Ion is extremely complicated; and therefore furnishes matter for a very long prologue recited by Mercury, merely for the instruction of the audience, to whom he addresses himself directly, and without any introduction.

ACT I.

The subject of the prologue is as follows. Creusa, the daughter of Erechtheus king of Athens, being beloved by Apollo, had a son by this deity, unknown to her father Erechtheus. In order to secure her honour, she exposed the infant in the very grotto which had been the scene of her misfortune: but with the precaution of placing him in a close cradle with some ornaments, in compliance with a family custom founded upon a fable generally received. According to this fable, Erichonius * her grandfather, and the son of the Earth, had been by Minerva confided to the care of the three daughters of Cecrops, with an express prohibition to look into the basket in which he was shut up. Aglaurus, one of the three, stimulated by her curiosity, opened this mysterious basket, and there found an infant with a serpent lying by it. Ovid relates this fable in the same manner as Euripides.

But to return to Creusa: she in some measure renewed the adventure of Erichonius, and Mercury did for her what Minerva had done for her ancestor. This deity, at the intreaty of Apollo, took the son of Creusa out of the grotto where his mother had concealed him, and transported him to the temple of Delphos.

* Erichonius was the fourth king of Athens. See this fable in Ovid's *Metam.* lib. ii.

The priestess of Apollo was shocked at first at this adventure, supposing it had happened to some Delphian woman who had been guilty of a double crime, first in suffering herself to be seduced, and afterwards in daring to profane so sacred a place. She had even resolved to put the infant out of this holy dwelling; but Apollo touched her heart, and compassion prevailed over her resentment; she brought up her little pupil herself. Ion grew up under the eye of his benefactress, and the asylum of those altars, while neither the priestess, nor himself, could gain any intelligence concerning the persons to whom he owed his birth. He had the good fortune to render himself so agreeable to the Delphians, that they made him keeper of the treasures deposited in the temple. Mean time his mother married Xuthus on the following occasion.

This Xuthus, who was not a native of Athens, but of Achaia, and descended from Eolus, came to the assistance of the Athenians, when they were engaged in a powerful war, and obtained a complete victory for them over their enemies. For a service so considerable he was rewarded with Creusa and the scepter of Athens. Xuthus and his queen having lived many years in marriage without heirs, resolved to go to Delphos to consult the Oracle upon this occasion. Here it is, that the action of this play begins. Mercury anticipates the story by informing the spectators that Apollo designs to make Ion, the son he had by Creusa, to pass for the son of Xuthus, in order to procure him the honour of being the founder of Ionia, a considerable country in Greece.

Mercury having retired, Ion appears at the head of several of Apollo's priests. "Already, says he, the God of light, drives
 " his flaming chariot through the celestial road, and gilds the earth
 " with his bright rays. The tops of the hills shine with redoubled
 " lustre. The temple is filled with perfumes; and the priestess,
 " seated on her tripod, prepares to pronounce to the people the
 " oracles of the God. Go then, ye holy ministers, go to the
 " Castalian spring, and after you have washed yourselves in that
 " pure stream, return again to the temple. But above all, be care-
 " ful to purify your lips, that you may be worthy to utter the sa-
 " cred mysteries of the Divinity. As for me, satisfied with the
 " humble employment which from my infancy I have exercised, I
 " will adorn the vestibule of this temple with crowns of laurel,
 " and frighten hence with my arrows, the birds which pollute the
 " offerings, for I, who never knew my parents, have reason to look
 " upon

"upon this temple where I was brought up, as a sacred asylum,
"which merits all my cares."

While Ion is thus piously employed, the laurels, the myrtles, the water of Castalia, all bring to his memory the idea of the Deity he serves, and the purity which becomes his minister. "Happy labour! cries he, O Phœbus! it is thee I serve, and in the place which is most dear to thee. How delightful, how glorious to me is this employment! I am not the vile slave of any mortal; I am the minister of a God, and this God is my real father, since it is by him, and by his benefits that I live." All this is a kind of hymn with a burden in praise of Apollo. It is followed by some words and actions, which would appear low and familiar upon our stage: for Ion seeing a crowd of birds from Parnassus flying about the temple, he scares them away with loud cries, and threatens to pierce them with his arrows, calling each at the same time by its name.

Some Athenian virgins, who enter immediately afterwards, form another very simple scene: they view the vestibule of the temple with great curiosity. "It is not only in Athens, say they, Athens so dear to the Gods, that we see magnificent temples, since in Delphos there is one so beautiful." Hereupon, Ion makes them observe several pictures, or bass-reliefs, which represent the histories of the Gods.

"Behold, says he, the son of Jupiter*, who killed the Lernean Hydra."

CHORUS. I see him.

ION. Look at this person next him, who holds a burning torch† in his hand.

CHORUS. Who is he? We often represent him in our works of embroidery.

ION. It is Iolas, the servant of Hercules. Take a view also of this man‡, who is mounted upon a winged horse, aiming a stroke at the monster with three bodies.

This is sufficient to shew the taste of this scene: to each question Ion answers: "You see the giants here; there is Bacchus with his Thyrsus; yonder is Pallas with her Egis;" and the

* Hercules.

† I have taken this reading upon the authority of Barns, because Iolas, as Hercules cut off the heads of the hydra, burnt

them with his torch: the common reading cannot be well understood.

‡ Bellerophon, armed against the Chymæra.

like ::

like : which although real beauties, yet they are of too simple a kind to please our age. Virgil partly copies this scene when he describes *Enceas* in a temple at *Carthage*, examining the paintings.

A temple here *Sidonian Dido* rais'd
 To heav'n's dread empress, that with riches blaz'd;
 Unnumber'd gifts adorn'd the costly shrine,
 By her own presence hallow'd and divine.
 Brass were the steps, the beams with brass were strong,
 The lofty doors, on brazen hinges rung.
 Here, a strange scene before his eyes appears,
 To raise his courage, and dispel his fears;
 Here first, he hopes his fortunes to redress;
 And finds a glimmering prospect of success.
 While for the queen he waited, and amaz'd,
 O'er the proud shrine and pompous temple gaz'd;
 While he the town admires, and wond'ring stands
 At the rich labours of the artist's hands;
 Amid the story'd walls, he saw appear,
 In speaking paint, the tedious *Trojan war*;
 The war, that fame had blaz'd the world around,
 And every battle fought on *Phrygian ground*.
 There *Priam* stood, and *Agamemnon* here,
 And *Pelus'* wrathful son, to both severe.
 Struck with the view, oh! friend, the hero cries,
 (Tears, as he spoke, came starting from his eyes)
 Lo! the wide world our miseries employ;
 What realm abounds not with the woes of *Troy*?
 See! where the venerable *Priam* stands!
 See virtue honour'd in the *Libyan sands*!
 For *Troy*, the generous tears of *Carthage* flow;
 And *Tyrian* breasts are touch'd with human woe.
 Now banish fear, for since the *Trojan* name
 Is known, we find our safety in our fame.
 Thus while his soul the moving picture fed,
 A show'r of tears the groaning hero shed.
 For here, the fainting *Greeks* in flight he view'd;
 And there, the *Trojans* to their walls pursu'd
 By plum'd *Achilles*, with his dreadful spear,
 Whirl'd on his kindling chariot thro' the war.

Not

Not far from thence, proud Rhæsus' tents he knows
 By their white veils, that match'd the winter snows,
 Betray'd and stretch'd amidst his slaughter'd train,
 And, while he slept, by fierce Tydides slain;
 Who drove his coursers from the scene of blood,
 E'er the fierce steeds had tasted Trojan food,
 Or drank divine Scamander's fatal flood.

There Troilus lies disarm'd (unhappy boy!)
 From stern Achilles, round the fields of Troy;
 Unequal he! to such an arm in war!
 Supine, and trailing from his empty car,
 Still, tho' in death, he grasps the flowing reins,
 His startled coursers whirl him o'er the plains;
 The spear, inverted, streaks the dust around;
 His snowy neck and tresses sweep the ground.
 Mean time a pensive supplicating train
 Of Trojan matrons, to Minerva's fane,
 In sad procession, with a robe repair,
 Beat their white breasts, and rend their golden hair.
 Unmov'd with pray'rs, disdainfully she frown'd,
 And fixt her eyes, relentless, on the ground.
 Achilles here, his vengeance to enjoy,
 Thrice dragg'd brave Hector round the walls of Troy:
 Then to the mournful fire, the victor sold
 The breathless body of his son, for gold.
 His groans now deepen'd, and new tears he shed,
 To see the spoils, and chariot of the dead,
 And Priam both his trembling hands extend,
 And, gash'd with wounds, his dear disfigur'd friend.
 Mix'd with the Grecian peers, and hostile train,
 Himself he view'd conspicuous in the plain:
 And swarthy Memnon, glorious to behold,
 His eastern hosts, and arms that flame with gold.
 All furious led Penthesilea there,
 With moony shields, her Amazons to war;
 Around her breast her golden belt she threw;
 Then thro' the thick-embattled squadrons flew;
 Amidst the thousands stood the dire alarms,
 And the fierce maid engag'd the men in arms.

PITT.

This passage of the *Æneid* is so beautiful, that notwithstanding its length, I have given it a place here, to shew with what delicacy Virgil has imitated the ancients, and improved upon the natural beauties he found in their writings. There is another also of the same kind, which, I am persuaded, the reader will not be displeased to meet with here. It is in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, where the poet describes the arrival of Eneas at Cuma; and represents this hero viewing the temple of Diana.

To Phœbus' fane the heroë past along,
 And those dark caverns where the Sibyl sung.
 There, as the God enlarg'd her soul, she fate,
 And open'd all the deep decrees of fate.
 The train with reverence enter, and behold
 Chaste Trivia's grove, and temple roof'd with gold;
 A structure rais'd by Dædalus, ('tis said)
 When from the Cretan king's revenge he fled.
 On wings to northern climes he dar'd to soar,
 Through airy ways unknown to man before;
 Full many a length of sky and ocean past,
 On Cuma's sacred tow'rs he stoop'd at last.
 Then hung to Phœbus, in the strange abode,
 The wings that steer'd him thro' the liquid road,
 And rais'd the pompous pile in honour of the God,
 The matchless artist, on the lofty gate,
 Engrav'd Androgeos' memorable fate:
 And here by lot sad Athens yearly paid
 Sev'n hapless youths, to sooth his angry shade.
 Here stood the fatal urn; and there with pride
 Fair Crete rose tow'ring on the silver tide.
 There too the father of the herds was seen,
 Who quench'd the passion of the lustful queen;
 Their birth, a beast below, a man above,
 The mingled offspring of preposterous love!
 There stood the winding pile, whose mazes run
 Round within round, and end where they begun.
 But when the pitying Dædalus survey'd
 The hopeless passion of the * royal maid,

* Ariadne.

He led her Theseus through the puzzling ways,
 Safe with a clue, and open'd every maze.
 Thou too, poor Icarus! hadst born a part,
 Had grief not check'd him, in thy parent's art!
 He thrice essay'd the mournful task in vain;
 Thrice shook his hand, and drop'd the task again.
 Thus had they gaz'd o'er all the costly frame,
 When lo! Achates from the temple came:
 With him the priestess, the prophetic maid. PITT.

The difference between the pictures of Virgil and those of Euripides, is too striking to escape notice. The former are indeed full of sentiments, and therefore more interesting than the latter, which contain only general subjects: but Euripides has shewn no less judgment than Virgil in his choice of the stories represented in these paintings; because the matter in hand is nothing more than the mere curiosity of the young women, who having arrived at the temple of Delphos before their mistress, cast slight glances upon the objects around them, rather that the spectators may be informed of the purpose of this journey, than amused by unseasonable descriptions. Accordingly this article takes up but a short part of the scene.

The virgins express an inclination to enter the sanctuary also, that they may see all that is to be seen; but Ion acquaints them, that none are permitted to enter there, but such as come to consult the oracle, after offering the usual sacrifices.

These Athenian virgins who form the Chorus, make themselves known for the attendants of an Athenian lady, named Creusa. It is not easy to know whether she entered with her women, or came into the temple after them, for hitherto Ion has been conversing with her train, and she suddenly answers to a question, which was not addressed to her: perhaps she was desirous of keeping herself concealed, as her attendants seem to intimate.

The remainder of the scene, or, if you will, this new scene, is a long conversation between Creusa and Ion. The youth is struck with her majestic air, and the tears which flow from her eyes. At first, she seems solicitous to elude the curious enquiries of this minister of Apollo, and afterwards she replies in very mysterious terms. "Doubtless, says she, thou art astonished at the tears I shed;
 "but the sight of this temple, recalls a fatal idea to my remembrance. I forgot I was at Delphos, and all my thoughts were

“ employed on Athens. Ah! how wretched are women! how
“ unjust the Gods! To whom can we have recourse, when it is
“ by the iniquity of our sovereign masters that we are miserable?”

This complaint so unintelligible to Ion, creates in him a strong desire to discover the secret cause of this lady's affliction; but she, to prevent the prying curiosity of this stranger, endeavours to suppress her emotions. Ion having complimented her upon her illustrious birth, “ Alas! says she, to this advantage alone is my
“ happiness confined.” She then relates the fable concerning her ancestor Erichthonius (a high claim to nobility); the sacrifice which Erechthus her father made of her sons for the preservation of his country (another title to heroism); and the fate of that prince, who was, by Neptune's command, swallowed up alive in the earth, which he opened with a stroke of his trident for that purpose. The place, where Erechthus was swallowed up, being that wherein Creusa was seduced, the mention of it renews her grief. “ Fatal
“ place! cries she, would I had never seen thee.” Ion, whose curiosity is again raised, makes another attempt to gain the confidence of this princess, but she artfully turns the conversation upon her husband Xuthus. He will soon come to the temple, she says, to consult the oracle; but he is gone first to the cave of Trophoni-
nius. It is his grief at being without children, that brings him to Delphos. “ What! says Ion, hast thou never had any children?” This question perplexes Creusa by its simplicity, but she dexterously eludes it, and only answers, “ Alas! Apollo knows that.”

Creusa now in her turn questions Ion concerning his birth and employment. He ingenuously acknowledges to her, that he has not yet been able to discover who his parents were, and that he has passed his whole life at the altar, which served him as an asylum. “ I know a mother, says Creusa, as unfortunate as thine.” “ Who is she, answers Ion, I beseech thee name her.” Creusa, like a woman of sense and prudence, takes advantage of this opening to propose her business under the name of another. “ This mother, says the queen, is the person for whom I am
“ come to consult the oracle before my husband returns.” The minister of Apollo offers her his service in behalf of this afflicted lady, upon which Creusa proceeds to tell him her whole story. This friend of hers, she says, Apollo had ravished, and had a son by her, whom the mother exposed as soon as born, and has never heard of since; but, according to the time when this adventure happened, that child, if living, must be about the same age with Ion.

Ion

Ion surpris'd at the similitude between the fate of this infant and his own, yet cannot conceive how a deity could have such a sort of commerce with a mortal ; and therefore concludes, that it will be useless, and perhaps dangerous, to consult Phœbus concerning a crime which it is not probable he will acknowledge. Creusa sighs, and in a low voice complains of the ingratitude of that God. When perceiving her husband at a distance, she intreats Ion to be secret, and not to disclose the adventure of her friend which she had just related, for fear that such a conversation, if repeated with the least variation, might cause some trouble, and raise suspicions injurious to her honour.

Xuthus, as he enters, salutes the God of Parnassus after the Grecian manner. He then accosts Creusa, and tells her, that the oracle of the cave would not anticipate that of Delphos ; but that it had assured him beforehand, that he should not return without children, nor Creusa without an answer.

Both the king and queen, after some prayers, enter the temple, while Ion prepares to bring water for sprinkling the victims : but before he goes out, he reflects a moment upon the conversation he had had with Creusa, and irreverently enough condemns the conduct of Apollo. “ How couldst thou, O son of Jupiter ! says he, delude mortal beauties, and afterwards abandon their children to destruction ? Thou, who art a God, ought’st to set examples of virtue to mankind. Thou punishest those who are wicked among us : does it then become legislators to violate their own laws ? If this be true, which I know not how to believe, mortals will in their turn inflict a punishment on you, and your temples will soon be deserted. If you indulge unlawful passions, no longer condemn men for doing the same : they only imitate your vices, who are their sovereigns.” Such were the thoughts which the wisest among the pagans entertained of their divinities, or rather of those follies attributed to them by poetry.

The Chorus, who remain in the vestibule of the temple, offer prayers to Lucina, Minerva, and Diana, to obtain for their queen a posterity worthy the race of Erechthus. There is here a very elegant passage upon the advantages arising from a numerous offspring. It is much the same with what Cicero says in his Oration for Cluentius, where he calls a son “ the hope of his father, the honour of that name he is to perpetuate, the support of his house, the heir of the family, and a citizen destined to the service of the state.” *Spem parentis, memoriam nominis, subsidium generis,*

generis, bæredem familiæ, designatum reipublicæ civem. It is alike impossible to translate happily into our language either the Greek of Euripides, or the Latin of Cicero.

A C T II.

Ion, at his return, asks, whether Xuthus is come out of the temple. That prince appears instantly; and, seeing Ion, accosts him with the title of son. The minister of Apollo shuns the offered embraces of Xuthus, whose words appear to him to be wild and incoherent. Upon what foundation does he call him son? Surely he must not have comprehended the sense of the oracle he had received. This debate produces, by degrees, an explanation of the whole mystery. The oracle had declared to Xuthus, that the first person, whom he met at his coming out of the temple, was his son; and that prince, in his transport to hear that he should find a son, never thought of asking the oracle, by whom he had this child. It is this circumstance which occasions the doubts and perplexity of Ion. "How, says he to the king, can I be thy son, when thou dost not even know who is my mother?" To this Xuthus can no otherwise answer, but that, before his marriage, he had been engaged in an amour when he came to Delphos to be present at the feasts of Bacchus. Ion, perceiving that the time when this adventure happened agreed pretty exactly with his own age, consents to acknowledge the king of Athens for his father, through reverence for the orders of the oracle. It must needs be that the Greeks at that time carried their veneration for oracles to the highest excess, since Xuthus gave such easy credit to this: as for Ion, he could not but be a gainer by acknowledging such a father as the king of Athens. But we shall soon see, this is not the motive by which he was influenced.

The Chorus congratulate their master upon so fortunate a discovery; and to Creusa, they wish heirs of the blood of Erecthus; mean time Xuthus and Ion confine their wishes to the finding again her from whom Ion received his birth.

The father proposes to this new-found son to leave to time the explanation of this mystery, and in the mean while to quit Delphos, which he must now look on as a place of banishment, and hasten to Athens his true country, where a scepter and the most shining fortune await him. "Thou answerest me not, continues he: why dost thou cast down thine eyes? From whence

“ proceeds the concern I see thee under ? Ah ! must the tenderness of our mutual embraces be followed with a behaviour so alarming ? How must this shock an indulgent father ! ”

I O N. Prince, things seen in different situations, present very different appearances. I cannot but bless my destiny that has restored to me a father like thee ; but since thou art desirous to know the cause of my uneasiness, this it is, O king ! I am sensible that the Athenian people, proud of their origin, make it their boast, that they owe all their advantages to themselves alone ; what reception will they give to the illegitimate son of a stranger ? Contempt is the least outrage I must expect to meet with. Should I endeavour to be distinguished among the great, the people will hate me ; they always look on grandeur with envy and malignity. On the other hand, good citizens, whose wise maxim of policy it is, to confine themselves within the sphere of a private station, will laugh at me for my temerity, should I presume to meddle in affairs of state, a conduct which in a republic is almost always attended with danger. I would chuse to be raised by thy favour to the first rank ; but have I not reason to fear such distinction in a state where the nobles cannot endure any competitors ? Shall I intrude into a family to give occasion for complaint to a wife enraged at having shared all thy griefs, without a hope of partaking in thy good fortune. Alas ! how is it possible to expect that Creusa should not hate the object of thy tenderness, when she has no expectation of having such a pledge of her nuptials ? For it is not to be doubted but thy affection will be unequally divided between us. If I should be honoured with the greatest share, what confusion shall I not introduce in thy house ? Too well thou knowest already the fatal effects of a passion which thinks itself neglected. And after all, great prince ! thy wife, thus hopeless of heirs of her own, moves my compassion. Descended as she is from an illustrious race, she merits a better fate. In vain wouldst thou allure me with the prospect of a crown : its lustre dazzles not my eyes so much as to hide from me the evils that attend it. Is it to live happy, to be surrounded with apprehensions and cares ? Believe me, I prefer the condition of a private man, who is accountable for his leisure to himself alone, to that of a king, whose ceaseless fears oblige him to seem a friend to bad men, and a foe to the virtuous. Thou perhaps wilt tell me, that pomp and riches are to be preferred to the inglorious quiet I live in. No, prince, no ; I never can endure those cares and anxieties, which are the necessary attendants

tendants upon great wealth. Suffer me to enjoy my beloved mediocrity, and be thou thyself a judge of my happiness. My leisure is my own, calm and undisturbed. I have no enemies, none who envy my good fortune. I have never had the mortification to be supplanted by unworthy rivals. The praises of the Gods, and a pious attendance upon the strangers who come here, make up the business of my life; and when I have dismissed some of these with joy, others arrive to whom I have still the pleasure of giving satisfaction. But what I prize above all these advantages, is, that, both by inclination and duty, I endeavour to render myself virtuous, and worthy of the Deity whom I serve. Judge now, O prince! whether there is room for choice between such blessings, and those thou offerest me. O! permit me to continue in my present humble employment, since, after all, it is indifferent whether wealth or competence constitutes our happiness.

This is one of those touches which nature avowes in every age, and which Racine * has happily transferred to the stage of France. Xuthus answers no otherwise than by telling his son, that he must yield to his new fortune, and that he is going to offer sacrifices, and to prepare a feast to celebrate the birth-day of his son. He calls him Ion, in allusion to his having been the first person he saw at his coming out of the temple †; and intirely to remove all difficulties, he commands the Chorus, upon pain of death, not to mention this affair to Creusa. He resolves to keep her in ignorance of what had happened, till a fit opportunity offered to prevail upon her to suffer his son to succeed to the throne of Erectus. Upon this condition Ion consents to attend his father to Athens,

* See Racine's *Athaliah*, act. ii. scene 7, and other scenes. If this work of mine should be followed by a sequel, among several discourses of which it will consist, there will be one upon Imitation, in which I shall shew with what art and dexterity Racine has incorporated with his own genius that of the ancients, and particularly that of Euripides, to make one that should be quite of a new kind. I shall there shew the inimitable facility of that ingenious imitator, who has made beauties of the first class out of an infinite number of simple strokes and

touches, which no skill of a translator could perfectly impress. In the mean time, if the reader will just glance upon *Athaliah*, he will discover Ion in Joas, at least to a great degree, and will find the Greek Chorusses of those of the French play, without reckoning a great number of beautiful strokes, and the wonderful simplicity of that fine tragedy, which I hope some time hereafter to display.

† Because this youth was the first object that met the eyes of Xuthus upon his coming out of the temple, ἡ πρώτη μοῖρα.

and

and wishes for nothing more ardently than to find his mother among the Athenian women.

Creusa's attendants foresee the fatal effects of this oracle; and, notwithstanding the express commands of Xuthus, indignation prevails over fear; more faithful to the blood of Erechthus than to a foreign king, they resolve to discover this secret to Creusa, and at once to secure the liberty of Athens, and give the queen her revenge by destroying Ion.

A C T III.

Creusa enters, followed by an old man, who had been governor to Erechthus, and whom she respected as a father. She intreats him to join his prayers to hers to obtain of Apollo such an oracle as she wished for. While the old man prepares to enter the temple and perform her commands, she bethinks herself of asking her women what answer Xuthus had received from the God. The Chorus, by looks full of concern, and interrupted answers, give her to understand, that something unfortunate had happened; and raise her curiosity still more by acquainting her with the orders Xuthus had given them to be secret, and the punishment he threatened them with, in case they disobeyed. At length these women explain themselves by degrees, and reveal the whole affair. The queen, struck as with a thunderbolt, remains silent through astonishment and grief; but the old man, full of zeal for the interests of the family of Erechthus, and enraged at an action so unworthy of a prince, exclaims: "My queen, thou art betrayed, thy husband intends to
 "dethrone thee. It is not so much through hatred to him, as
 "fidelity to thee, that I presume to speak to thee in this manner
 "of a stranger, who, after thou hast honoured him with thy
 "hand, has not been ashamed to violate the faith he swore to
 "thee, and to procure himself heirs out of thy family; listen to
 "me, and I will unfold the whole mystery." This he does in such a manner as is very likely to increase the consternation of the queen; but also with great probability with regard to the circumstances he collects together: the queen's barrenness, the journey to Delphos, the sudden discovery of a son; all this, he says, has the appearance of a design formed before, to place the child of some beloved mistress upon the throne of Athens. He paints this artifice in the blackest colours, in order to rouse the vengeance of Creusa, and tells her plainly, that, if she would pre-

vent her own ruin, she must destroy her enemies ; and this she can do no other way than by a poniard or poison : he even offers himself to be the executioner of her just revenge, and the Chorus adopt the same furious sentiments.

Creusa, entirely convinced of her husband's treachery, takes off the mask, and enters upon an explanation very bold for a woman. " Shall I speak, cries she, or shall I still be silent ? Too scrupulous modesty, cease to constrain me ! What have I to fear now ? " Banished from my throne, deprived of the hope of ever having heirs of my own blood ; by what remaining duty am I bound to " this ungrateful husband ? " This speech is followed by horrid oaths, by which she swears to reveal her own and Xuthus' shame. Mean time the tears that flow fast from her eyes, and the blushes which overspread her face, shew what pangs this confession cost her. Accordingly she begins with reproaching both men and Gods with ingratitude and perfidy. And here she bitterly inveighs against Phœbus, declaring that this God had robbed her of her honour, and had suffered the son she bore him to be devoured by birds, while he gives Xuthus a son to sway her scepter.

The Chorus and the old man, alike surprised at a misfortune which they had never before heard of, can with difficulty comprehend the sense of her words. Therefore the old governor prevails upon her to repeat the whole story, in order that he may, if possible, discover some traces of this exposed infant, who is the lawful heir to the throne, and might prove the revenger of his mother's wrongs. But Creusa confesses, that she hid him in a grotto, and never afterwards saw him. " Ah ! inhuman mother ! " exclaims the old man ; O ! still more barbarous Deity ! " Creusa's account of this adventure forces these expressions from him, for she gives a moving description of her parting with the unhappy infant, who in vain held out its arms to her, and the fatal necessity which obliged her to sacrifice her maternal tenderness to the preservation of her honour.

" Revenge thyself, says the governor, and begin with punishing the lover who has undone thee."

CREUSA. How can I, who am a mortal, punish a God ?

GOVERNOR. Set fire to the temple of Delphos.

CREUSA. Awed by piety I dare not do this. Shall I bring on myself new misfortunes ?

GOVERNOR. Well, punish thy husband at least.

CREUSA. I cannot ; I loved this husband once.

GOVER-

GOVERNOR. Yet crush this new-born monster, this Ion, who arms himself against thee.

Creusa listens with less reluctance to this proposal than the former; and now the question is, by what means he is to be destroyed. The old man proposes the most violent, such as stabbing him while he sits at table with his friends; but the queen objects to this. "It belongs to thee then, says he, to find out another expedient;" and accordingly Creusa hits upon one worthy of an enraged woman. She has a liquor, she says, which was a present from Minerva; it is some drops of the blood of Medusa, which was given by that Goddess to Eriethonius, of which one half causes immediate death, and the other has the quality of curing. Creusa orders the governor to poison Ion with the mortal liquor, but thinks it better to wait till her victim arrives at Athens. "No," answers the governor, we must dispatch him here, that it may not be known who was the author of the deed."

Creusa consents, and gives him a golden vase in which the liquor is contained, with directions to pour some of it into the cup out of which Ion drinks. While she retires to her apartment to wait the effect, the old man encourages himself to commit the murder by this abominable sentence: "Let us be virtuous when all things favour us; but when the point is to revenge ourselves on an enemy, let us silence the importunate clamours of virtue."

These sentiments, and the whole conduct of this murder, seem but little suitable to persons in whose fate the spectators are to be interested. The Chorus are as guilty as the principal persons in the play, and their zeal for the family of Erechthus cannot, in my opinion, excuse their cruelty; although the poet in the interlude of this act endeavours to erect it into a virtue. It must be acknowledged however, that the situation is admirable; it arises from the passions of the human heart, and consequently is in the true taste of the drama.

ACT IV.

A servant of Creusa's comes in great terror to ask the Chorus where the queen is, who has in vain been sought for in every part of the city, and condemned to death by the general voice of the Delphians. Apparently this man seeks for her in order to save her, and yet he stays long enough with the Chorus to give a circum-

stantial account of the manner in which the conspiracy against Ion was discovered, in part as follows :

“ Xuthus and his son went from hence to offer sacrifices, and
 “ to prepare a feast to celebrate the birth of Ion. Xuthus took
 “ upon himself the care of offering the sacrifice ; and, just before
 “ he set forwards for the double summit of Parnassus to sprinkle
 “ each with the blood of victims, in honour of Bacchus, he said
 “ to his son : Do thou cause tents to be pitched, and give the Del-
 “ phians a magnificent feast, without waiting for my return.”

The poet's precaution in removing Xuthus out of the way, was very necessary, as we shall soon see : yet it does not entirely excuse the fault which he wanted to avoid.

The servant describes with great art, and doubtless with too much, the hall where the feast was held. “ It was a single tent,
 “ which contained an acre laid out in an oblong square, and ca-
 “ pable of containing all the inhabitants of Delphos. It was
 “ adorned with the richest tapestry of the temple, which made a
 “ most grand and beautiful shew. For instead of the ground-floor,
 “ was seen the magnificent present of Hercules, the monument
 “ of his victory over the Amazons, and their glorious spoils. It
 “ was the representation of a sky, strewed with stars ; the Sun,
 “ lashing on his fiery steeds, was going to plunge into the ocean,
 “ and left to mortals only the faint rays of an expiring light.
 “ Night, habited in long black crape, drove her light chariot along
 “ the æthereal plain, followed by a great number of shining stars,
 “ among which the Pleiads were distinguished, and Orion armed
 “ with his sword.” He describes also in the same manner the
 She-Bear, whose tail formed several folds, the Full Moon, which
 regulates the months, with the Hyades and Aurora at a distance,
 waiting for the departure of the stars. “ For walls, continues
 “ this domestic, there were other ornaments, such as representa-
 “ tions of naval battles, of hunting, of centaurs, stags, and lions ;
 “ and lastly, before the entrance there was a Cecrops with the
 “ tail of a serpent, twisted into curls, and his daughters ranged
 “ on each side of him. All the tables were full of golden cups.”

This feast, considering the little time allowed for preparations, resembles the enchanted feasts of the Fairies. Besides, the description given of it here, which is rather trifling * I think than grand, and

* In itself it has great beauty and elegance, but it is misplaced ; a painter might form a very fine picture upon this description.

certainly out of place, is not likely to please a company of trembling women, who, in the discovery of the plot they were concerned in, hear the sentence of their own death. The narrator ought surely to have confined himself to the following particulars :

“ A herald, with the usual ceremony, having invited all the
“ citizens to the feast, the hall was presently filled, and the guests,
“ adorned with crowns, were placed at table, when an old
“ man entered, and increased the general pleasure by singing
“ the public song. When he found them enlivened with wine
“ and music, he proposed to them to have large cups for drink-
“ ing, and took delight in serving his new master himself. In
“ the wine he presented to Ion, he had mixed a poison which, it
“ is said, he received from Creusa. Ion had already poured out
“ some for a libation, and was preparing to drink, when a word,
“ that happened to escape one of the attendants, seeming to him
“ to be a bad presage, he ordered another cup to be brought him,
“ and made a libation of all the wine that remained in the for-
“ mer, inviting the guests to do the like. Mean time a great
“ number of pigeons flew into the tent, and tasted the wine which
“ was poured upon the ground. Nothing extraordinary happened
“ to any of them ; but to that one which had flown near Ion :
“ this bird as soon as it had dipped its bill into the poisoned wine,
“ which seemed to torture it excessively, uttered a plaintive sound,
“ and fell dead before the spectators. Ion starting instantly from
“ his seat, tore his robes, and cried out : Some secret enemy has
“ contrived my death. It is thou, old man, who must tell me
“ who this enemy is, since it was from thy hand I received the
“ poison. The old man, after some evasive answers, at length
“ confessed, that Creusa had employed him to poison his wine.
“ Ion ran instantly at the head of the guests to the ministers of
“ the temple to demand justice, and all with one voice have con-
“ demned the queen to be thrown off the top of a rock.”

I am not in the least apprehensive that I shall be blamed by the most zealous partisans of antiquity for pronouncing that there is a capital fault in this useless recital, since those who are most concerned in it, I mean Creusa's women, are under no necessity of knowing more than that the whole plot was discovered, without troubling themselves about the manner in which it was brought about, and still less with a description of the feast : besides, the chief concern of this domestic, who had been a witness of this event, was to find out his mistress as soon as possible, in order to
favour

favour her escape, and not to trifle away the time in describing a hall and a feast.

The Chorus, conscious of their guilt in betraying the king's secret, and in being accomplices in Creusa's intended crime, find that on both these accounts they are obnoxious to punishment, and perceiving no means of escape, abandon themselves to terrors natural enough to women, and which might have been raised without so minute a relation.

I am persuaded, notwithstanding the usual disposition of the scenes, that the fourth act concludes with the complaints of the Chorus upon this occasion, and that the fifth is opened by Creusa. However that may be, the queen, upon hearing that she is condemned to death, finds means to make her escape, and having reached the vestibule of the temple, asks advice of the Chorus in the dreadful extremity to which she is reduced: but these women, terrified to the last degree at the danger which threatens themselves, can think of no other expedient for her than to embrace the altar of the Gods. Creusa takes refuge there but just in time, for immediately afterwards the stage is filled with men in arms led by Ion, who comes to seize his enemy. As soon as he perceives her, his rage breaks out in this apostrophe to the river Cephissus: "Is it possible that from thee this viper is descended, whose malice is a more subtle venom than the poison she caused to be given me? Seize her this instant, and let her body be torn in pieces as she falls from one rock to another. Happy is it for me, that thy designs against me, vile woman, were discovered before I arrived at Athens. If thou hast had the boldness to make attempts upon my life in the midst of Delphos, what might I not have expected from thee in the security of thy own palace! Doubtless I should there have fallen a victim to thy dissembled kindness. But think not, this altar and his temple shall shield thee from my vengeance. If compassion ought to take place here, it is due to my mother and myself."

Ion here speaks of his mother, not imagining that it is her whose death he so eagerly seeks: Creusa also knows not that he is her son; and this ignorance on both sides produces the interesting perplexity which follows:

CREUSA. I forbid you all, in the name of Apollo, and in my own name to approach this altar.

ION. What connection is there between thee and Apollo?

CREUSA. I am devoted to that God.

ION,

ION. Didst thou not intend to murder his son?

CREUSA. When Xuthus became thy father, thou wert no longer the son of Apollo.

ION. But I have been his son, and it is to him that I owe every thing.

CREUSA. Thou wert Apollo's formerly, and now I am his.

ION. I have always been innocent, and thou art impious.

CREUSA. My only crime is, the having endeavoured to wreak my vengeance on the declared enemy of my family.

ION. How am I thy enemy? Have I invaded thy kingdom?

CREUSA. Yes, cruel youth, thou hast thrown the house of Erechthus into the utmost disorder.

ION. Have I carried fire and sword into Athens?

CREUSA. Yes, by seeking to deprive me of my crown.

ION. My father declared me his heir to a crown which was the reward of his valour.

CREUSA. What right could a descendant of Eolus have to the kingdom of Athens?

ION. That right which he acquired by his courage; the right of a deliverer.

CREUSA. If he was the deliverer of Athens, must he become her tyrant, and an usurper?

ION. It was thine unjust fears then of what might happen hereafter, that induced thee to attempt my life?

CREUSA. I would have killed thee, to prevent my being killed myself.

ION. It is false; it was thy jealousy that suggested this impious design; thy rage to find thyself hopeless of heirs.

CREUSA. If I have no heirs, is that a sufficient reason to deprive me of my crown?

ION. And must I, because I am not thy son, lose my paternal inheritance?

CREUSA. No, thou shalt have it; take thy father's sword, and his buckler, those are all thy possessions, all thy inheritance.

ION. Away, quit this altar, and cease to profane the majesty of the God.

CREUSA. Take thy revenge; for here, and here only shalt thou murder me.

ION. Would thy wild rage pollute the crowns of the Deity?

CREUSA. I would load thee with the guilt of sacrilege.

Ion

Ion concludes with exclaiming against the injustice of the laws, which allow criminals the benefit of a sanctuary, due only to the innocent; and whether the acts have been improperly divided, as there is cause to believe they are, or for whatever other reason I know not; but the following act brings the priestess upon the stage to unravel the intrigue, without any other interlude.

A C T V.

The priestess comes out of the temple by divine inspiration, to put a stop to the rage of Ion. As she had held the place of a mother to him, he has for her all the reverence and respect of a tender son; but he knows not what to think of the orders she gives him, to go to Athens without staining his hands in the blood of his enemy. "Is it possible, said he, that I can incur any guilt by taking a lawful vengeance on my designed murderers?" The priestess in order to explain the matter by degrees, shews him a little cradle she had brought with her, in which she had found him when an infant. This cradle, so likely to prove the means of discovering his mother, she had never shewn him before, for so Apollo had commanded; and she does it now but in obedience to a new order she had received from the God. "Take it, says she, and let it assist thee in thy endeavours to find out thy mother."

There are in this piece several machines, for besides the priestess who makes one, and Minerva, who appears afterwards, another, it would not be easy to conceive, why this prophetess should have kept the cradle so long, without mentioning it, if the poet had not taken care to inform us more than once, that such was the will of Apollo; so that Apollo seems to have contrived every thing expressly to furnish out a subject for tragedy. She, after having executed his orders, takes leave of Ion, but gives him no further information concerning his birth, than that she had found him at the gate of the temple in the cradle she now leaves in his hands, and that he must for the future endeavour to discover his mother by those tokens, which he would find in that cradle, which Apollo had ordered to be delivered to him. It must be confessed, that this is done to prevent the plot from being unravelled too hastily, but certainly it is a fault, when, to bring about incidents however affecting, so many machines must be introduced.

Ion feels himself softened at the sight of this cradle, in which, when a helpless infant, he was exposed; he melts into tears at the thought that he owed perhaps his birth to a crime, and that his mother

mother instead of nourishing her infant at her breast*, abandoned it to death. He blesses the benevolent Deity who preserved him; and exclaims against the cruelty of his fate which had reduced him to such a deplorable extremity. Then, by a sympathising tenderness, he pities his unhappy mother, who, to preserve her honour, had been forced to sacrifice the infant she had brought into the world. Uncertain what resolution to take in the present conjuncture, at first he seems inclined to make an offering of his cradle to the Delphian God, that he may not be obliged to find in it, what it would give him pain to find, an infamous mother, a wretched slave, for the author of his birth. The uncertainty he is in at present, appears to him less terrible than a discovery which may render him contemptible. "But why, refuses he, do I doubt the favour of a God, who has so carefully preserved for me these tokens of my birth? I will look into this cradle then, since I cannot elude my destiny. Ye sacred ornaments that surround it, ye bands which keep my treasure concealed, why have you so long deceived my curious enquiries?"

While he prepares to open it, and expresses his astonishment to find it uninjured by time, Creusa knows the cradle, and instantly quits her sanctuary. "Ah! cries she, this is the cradle in which I exposed my child, and thou art he! I will abandon this altar, at the hazard of my life." Ion surprised at this new boldness of Creusa, orders her to be seized immediately, supposing, that it is her remorse, which occasioned the frenzy she shewed in quitting her asylum; but she hangs upon him, and persists in calling him her son. Ion, has recourse to a stratagem to convict her of falsehood, he requires her to tell him what is contained in the cradle before he opens it. The queen, without the least hesitation, undertakes to satisfy him, and answers with the utmost exactness to all his questions, she describes the linen in which the child was wrapped, together with the ornaments she deposited in the cradle; and as Ion takes out one, she names another. One is a figure of Medusa embroidered in linen, with a border of serpents in the form of an Ægis; a piece of work, which she wrought when a girl. Another is a bracelet or collar, composed of

* This was a general custom among the Grecian women.

little golden serpents according to the custom of the Erechthides in memory of Erechthonius, in whose cradle Minerva had laid a serpent. And lastly, a crown of laurel, formed of a branch of that laurel tree, which Minerva produced in Athens, by striking the earth with her spear.

In a word, Creusa, without looking into the cradle, describes every thing it contains with such exactness, that the youth can no longer doubt of her being his mother, accordingly he acknowledges her as such, and embraces her with great tenderness. This discovery is finely wrought up; but it would have been more pleasing if Creusa had not been intentionally guilty of poisoning her supposed enemy, a crime of so black a nature, that no motive of vengeance, however just, can render her worthy the tears of the audience. However, that we may not pronounce too lightly upon matters of such a nature, it must be remembered, that Creusa had but too much reason for this designed vengeance; and to injured women, poison holds the place of other arms.

There is another important passage which must make this scene now appear disagreeable; after the mother and son's first transports of joy are subsided, Creusa, who has no satisfactory reason to give why she had exposed the child, and why this child should have been transported to Delphos, finds herself obliged to discover to Ion, that he is not the legitimate son of Xuthus. It is with sighs, tears, and confusion that she makes this confession. Thus Ion in finding a mother, loses the father who had acknowledged him; and the queen is reduced to the hard necessity of explaining this mystery; but although she does it in the most favourable terms she can think of, saying with Hippolitus in Racine,

L'Hymen n'est pas toujours entouré de flambeaux.

Yet she raises terrible scruples in the mind of Ion concerning his birth: at length she declares the whole truth, but with apparent fear and confusion, she tells him, that Phœbus had forced her to become his wife; that she bore him a son; and that, in order to preserve her honour, she had exposed this pledge of her marriage with a Deity. It will easily be imagined, that Ion, during this recital, which he often interrupts with questions which shew his anxious curiosity, is agitated with very different emotions. To have a God for a father, is a circumstance which soothes his vanity; but yet so extraordinary a birth appears doubtful. However, both he
and

and Creusa reflect with tears of astonishment and sorrow, upon the strange caprice of fortune which had suffered a mother and a son to persecute each other to death. And here Euripides exerts that pathetic power, of which he is so absolute a master: but Ion again falling back into his reflexions, feels his scruples increase. He is transported to find a queen for his mother, but he would have his birth to be unstained; and to be assured of this, he draws near Creusa, and in a low voice, that the Chorus may not hear him, he acquaints her with the occasion of his fears.

Whatever precaution he takes in asking a question of this delicate nature, yet it cannot but throw his mother into confusion, and this would have a bad effect upon our theatre. For Ion, presses her to acknowledge freely, whether the name of Apollo be not a specious veil with which she endeavours to hide her fault, and the disgraceful birth of a son whom she had so lately found.

Creusa takes Minerva to witness to the truth of her adventure with Apollo, but what confirms Ion in his suspicions is, that the God, instead of acknowledging him for his son, gave him to Xuthus as his. "He gave thee to Xuthus, replies the queen, but he did not say, that thou wert his offspring. May not one friend give his son to another, in order that he may become his heir?" This reason is not too good, nor is Ion satisfied with it; therefore his mother gives him another, she tells him, that Phœbus shewed his affection for him, by being desirous that he should succeed a great king, which could not have been effected if the God had declared himself to be his father. "Alas! cries she, what inheritance had a Deity to give thee? Not even his name, his marriage being a secret, and the fruits of it exposed while an infant."

And Ion's suspicions seem even to Euripides himself, to be so well-founded, that he makes him take a resolution to consult Phœbus upon them. But Minerva prevents him from taking this step, and descends herself from heaven, to clear the queen's honour, and to remove the distrust of Ion.

The Goddess declares, that it was for this purpose she was sent by Apollo, who did not chuse to appear himself, that he might not hear any reproaches for what had passed. "It is Apollo, (says the Goddess to Ion,) who is thy father; if he has given thee to Xuthus, it is that thou mayst become the heir of an illustrious house; and it was his intention to acquaint thee with the whole secret at Athens, but thou hast hastened the explanation."

Minerva commands Creusa to place Ion upon the throne, as being a branch of the family of the Erechthides, assuring her, that this prince would become famous throughout all Greece; that his four sons would be the heads of four tribes in Athens; and that his grandsons should dwell in the Cyclades and the cities of Ionia *, the Goddess adds, that Creusa shall have two sons by Xuthus, one of which shall give his name to Doria †, and the other to Achaia ‡. All this is historical, and introduced expressly to sooth the vanity of the Greeks, who were fond of the notion of their ancient extraction. Lastly, Minerva exaggerates the benefit Creusa had received from Apollo; first, in the care he had taken to prevent her commerce with him from being discovered, and secondly, in his having preserved the life of the infant. From whence Pallas concludes, that it is necessary Creusa should not let her husband know that she is the mother of Ion, that she may not undeceive the good king in a point which he had so much at heart: in plain terms, Minerva is desirous that Xuthus should be the dupe of Apollo.

It is easy to see, that such fables as these are quite contrary to our ideas, and that a regular and exact translation of such a tragedy would not please in our age. Xuthus would have made a very indifferent figure in this scene, as well as in some of the former, when the business is to unfold the mystery of Creusa's commerce with Apollo; and therefore the poet has taken great care to keep the husband upon the hill Parnassus, employed in offering sacrifices, while all these things pass unknown to him, in which his honour is so much concerned. It is from a like motive of decency, that Euripides has not made Apollo appear; but this art does not render his present subject proper for us, where, after all, Apollo is a seducer, Minerva a go-between, Creusa cruel, Ion vindictive, the Chorus wicked, and Xuthus a dupe ||: besides, it is very improbable, that so many surprising incidents should happen.

* Ionia is a region separated from Eolia by the river Hermus. Its rivers are the Caister and the Meander.

† A part of Achaia nearest to Athens.

‡ Achaia proper, is in the Peloponnesus.

|| I may add also, that he was imprudent, in acknowledging before the Chorus the son which the oracle had given him,

when it was of such importance to him to keep this circumstance secret. Yet it is certain, that he was led to make this discovery, by the manner in which this event happened; but this does not hinder us from perceiving the great inconvenience of the Chorus being present, when it was natural for Xuthus to distrust those women.

at the foot of mount Parnassus, and that no report of them should reach the ears of Xuthus, whose son so narrowly escaped being poisoned, and whose wife is publicly condemned to death. By what means, after the calm which succeeded this terrible tempest, did the true cause of all those reports, which must necessarily make so much noise in the city, remain concealed from Xuthus, and how could he be informed of it without hurting his interest as a father, or his honour as a husband? Euripides leaves all this to his actors, who, instead of troubling themselves about it, retire very well satisfied, after paying their acknowledgements to Minerva and Apollo. However, I cannot help acknowledging here, with one of our best critics *, whom I have often heard declare the same, that notwithstanding the real or seeming defects in this piece, nothing can be more truly dramatic than a mother's attempting to destroy her son, whom she does not know, and she herself be upon the point of dying by the command of that son, while this intended parricide on both sides serves to restore the mother to the son, and the son to the mother.

* Father Porée.

HERCULES MAD:

A

TRAGEDY WRITTEN BY EURIPIDES.

AS we are already acquainted with the history of Hercules from reading the *Trachiniennes* of Sophocles, and the *Hercules Dying* of Seneca and Rotrou, there is no necessity for dwelling long upon the subject of this tragedy of Euripides.

Hercules, the son of Jupiter and Alcmena, married Megara, the daughter of Creon king of Thebes. This marriage was very advantageous to Amphitryon, the supposed father of Hercules, and general of the Theban armies; on the other side, the great renown Alcides had acquired, rendered this an honourable alliance, even for the princess of Thebes: but Hercules, after many glorious exploits, took a resolution to visit the kingdom of Pluto, and not returning any more, he was supposed to be dead. Mean time a sedition broke out in Thebes, the conspirators were headed by a person named Lycus, descended from a prince of that name, who had formerly reigned in Thebes, and had been murdered there. This Lycus, although a stranger, born in Eubœa, had the presumption to aspire to the Theban crown, and, with the assistance of the conspirators, killed Creon, and seized the government. He acted more like a tyrant than a king; and the first instance he gave of his cruelty, was to condemn Amphitryon, Megara, her children, and the whole race of Hercules to death, lest they should one day take vengeance upon him for the death of Creon. The unexpected return of Hercules changed the whole face of affairs, and gave occasion for this tragedy; the persons of which are, Amphitryon, Megara, Lycus, Iris, a Fury, a Messenger, Hercules, Theseus, and a Chorus consisting of ancient Thebans. The scene is in the vestibule of the palace of Hercules, near that of Lycus,

ACT I.

It is Amphitryon who opens the scene after the usual manner of Euripides. "Who knows not, says he, the son of Alceus, the father of Hercules, and the rival of Jupiter?" Thus the character of Amphitryon is, by this simple epithet, so completely drawn, that he may be always known. The openness with which he boasts that Jupiter is his rival, must give no surprise to those, who have imbibed the least knowledge of antiquity, though it is so opposite to all our notions, that in the eyes of a modern spectator it would make the whole process of the most serious drama completely ridiculous. This ridicule we must resolve to endure, and accommodate ourselves quietly to the ancient manners, and we shall then find something very affecting in Amphitryon's display of his calamities.

He gives, much in the same manner as I have already related it, the substance of the history of Hercules, of Creon, and Lycus; he marks the place where the scene is laid, namely the altar of Jupiter, erected by Hercules at the gate of his palace in Thebes. This altar he embraces as a sanctuary against the tyranny of Lycus, whom he describes in the blackest colours, considering himself as a victim to the policy of an usurper. Nothing can be more miserable than the situation to which he and his family are reduced. They are in want even of the common necessities of life, without succour, without support, without friends; among these some have the power, but not the will to release them, while others again have the will and not the power. It is in this wretched state that Amphitryon is represented with his family, which consists of Megara and his three grand-sons, the children of Hercules, all prostrate at the foot of the altar.

The prologue now suddenly changes to a dialogue: for Megara rises from the ground, and comes forwards, to converse with her father-in-law Amphitryon. But how does it happen that Euripides did not perceive, that it was extremely easy for him to prevent his exordium from having the air of mere prologues addressed to the audience? Megara might have made Amphitryon known, and he Megara, without speaking to the pit. But it was Euripides's extravagant fondness for perspicuity, which made him neglect this delicacy of art in almost all his tragedies.

Accord-

Accordingly it is Megara who makes herself known, not indeed by telling her name, but by comparing her former happiness with her present misery. It is the fate with which her children is threatened which shocks her most. She compares herself to a tender bird, who covers her young with her wings. They often, says this wretched mother, ask me, "where their father is? what he is doing? when he will return? They consider themselves as his children, they continue to seek him. In vain, continues she, have I endeavoured to put this notion of his return out of their minds; at the least noise they hear, they fly to meet their father, whom they vainly hope to see again. Alas! what succour now remains for us?" By the conclusion of her speech we find, that the tyrant's guards watch them continually, and that there is no possibility of escaping.

Amphitryon is still willing to indulge hope, and the delay of their death seems to him a favourable circumstance; but to Megara, this delay itself appears terrible. The conversation between them finishes with sentences of this sort, and then the Chorus enter. These old men, the few remaining friends to the oppressed family of Alcides, come to condole with them in their distress, this is all they can do for them. They lament the fate of the young princes, who already appear worthy of the hero to whom they owe their birth; but scarce have they begun to speak, when Lycus appears.

He insultingly asks the princes, why they seek to prolong their lives which he has proscribed? "What succour do they expect, what hope have they remaining? Is it that Hercules will return? Hercules is detained in the regions of the dead. Do they imagine they will owe their safety either to the pretended glory of Amphitryon, who makes it his boast that he had Jupiter for his rival? or to the grandeur of Megara, who thinks it so high an honour to be the wife of Hercules? Poor artifices to excite the pity of the Thebans!" Accordingly Lycus endeavours to undervalue the exploits of Alcides. "Must he be called valiant, says he, because he has overcome wild beasts and monsters? How did this boasted hero overcome them? with a bow and arrows, the arms that cowards use, when flight is ever uppermost in their thoughts. He only is an hero who fearless keeps his post, and with calm courage waits the approach of his enemy."

Lycus,

Lycus, after this severe sarcasm, confesses plainly, that having killed Creon, he will not spare the lives of those who may one day undertake to revenge their grand-father's death. This insolent speech, made by a king to a family oppressed by a conspiracy, shocks our manners; but had nothing contrary to those of the Greeks, who made no scruple to unveil the secret motives of their cruel policy: at least it shews us what was the genius of government in their time. Besides, Lycus, tho' a tyrant, durst not violate the sacred asylum of an altar; a king would not venture to profess, that his will was the only rule of his actions; he assigned reasons, either good or bad, for all he did, and therefore we see Lycus engaging in an argument with Amphitryon and Megara; one attacks, and the others defend themselves. This tragedy was written for a republic, where an appearance of justice, where popularity, argument, and a taste for declamatory speeches, prevailed.

Amphitryon begins his with declaring, that it belongs to Jupiter to defend the family of Hercules, his son: that as for him, he will only undertake to clear that hero from the undeserved reproach of cowardice; and this the old man does with great dignity. "The chariot of Jupiter, says he, from whence Hercules destroyed the giants*, and the forest of Pholos†, where he overthrew the centaurs, can witness to his valour. Ask even thy country, continues he to the tyrant, she will tell thee the great actions Alcides has performed in her:" for Hercules had taken and sacked Oechalia, a city of Eubœa, where Lycus was born.

As for his malicious insinuations, concerning the arms Hercules made use of, Amphitryon answers them thus: "A warrior, says he, heavily armed is a slave to his arms, and often falls a sacrifice to the cowardice of his own men, or to his ill luck, if he should happen to have his weapons broke." It must be acknowledged, that all this, as well as part of what follows, would to us appear a sophistical puerility; but it is necessary, that the manners of those times should be faithfully represented: we are pleased when we behold them in a picture, and they disgust us when represented upon the stage.

* In the plain of Phlegra in Macedonia.

† Upon a mountain of the same name, near mount Othrys in Thessaly.

With respect to the doom the tyrant had passed upon the children of Hercules, their grand-father says: "But why dost thou seek the lives of these innocents? What offence have they committed against thee? If it be prudence in an usurper to be apprehensive of the children of a hero, is it not as great a hardship for us to be sacrificed to his fears, as it would be for him to fall a victim to our revenge? Thou wishest to reign securely over this state. Well, be it so; banish us from hence, but do not murder us; otherwise tremble for thyself, lest thou shouldst suffer a fatal reverse of fortune." Amphitryon concludes his speech with an address to the Thebans, whom he reproaches with their ingratitude to Alcides, from whom they had received so many benefits. This is properly the conclusion of his oration, which the Chorus seem to applaud.

These remonstrances have no other effect upon the brutal tyrant than to make him more eager in hastening his revenge. Not daring to force these unfortunate princes from their sanctuary, he commands his guards to surround them with a pile of wood, and then to set fire to it; a barbarous custom, and conformable to that superstition which thinks it has performed its duty to the Gods, when, without forcing the suppliant from the altar, it obliges him either to quit it, or to perish there in flames. Thus it was that an article of religion was eluded, to satisfy a thirst of vengeance, without the appearance of impiety. As for the old men, who were attached to Amphitryon, friends who could afford him no other assistance than their compassion and their tears, Lycus, who fears them not, contents himself with telling them, that they have no longer Creon for their king, and that they are the slaves of a new master. The Chorus, enraged at the ignominious title of Slave, and at the cruelty of Lycus, break into very bitter reproaches in his presence. These generous old men breathe nothing but vengeance, and their greatest grief is, that their power is not equal to their courage.

Megara thanks them for their affection to her and her wretched family; but would not have them expose their lives and fortunes to the tyrant's rage: then, addressing herself to Amphitryon, she makes him a proposal full of noble fortitude. "I love my children, says she; no tender mother ever loved her offspring more. Death is terrible, and I confess that to me it appears so; but who can resist his fate? Since then we must die, let us resolve to meet our death voluntarily. Let us not delay till we
" are

" are shamefully executed, nor give our enemies occasion to despise
 " us, which would be an ignominy worse than death itself. Let
 " us nobly support the honour of our rank, and die in a manner
 " worthy of Hercules. Thou, Amphitryon, who art grown
 " old under laurels, wouldst thou stain thy glory by giving room
 " for any suspicion of thy want of courage? Would my husband,
 " whose fame is so justly established, would he, thinkst thou, pur-
 " chase the preservation of his children at the expence of his ho-
 " nour? Ah! no; the infamy of a father reflects disgrace upon
 " his children; it is the example of Hercules that I would imitate.
 " And oh! my father, how can I rely upon those hopes with
 " which thou flatterest thyself? Canst thou believe that the earth
 " will give back thy son? Alas! whoever returned from Pluto's
 " kingdom? Dost thou depend upon being able to move the heart
 " of a tyrant to compassion? Believe me, it is impossible. He
 " that has an enemy may oppose without loss of honour;
 " but what can we hope for from an inhuman tyrant? It came
 " into my mind, as well as thine, to solicit banishment for my
 " unfortunate sons as a favour: but is it to preserve them, to give
 " them up to poverty? All shun the miserable, and they can
 " scarce find a friend who will continue so longer than a day.
 " Dare then to suffer death with us, since death is inevitable."

It is by arguments such as these, that Megara endeavours to
 animate Amphitryon. The generous old man replies, that it is
 neither cowardice, nor an indecent fondness for life, which made
 him seek to protract their fate, but tenderness and compassion for
 his grandsons. " Behold me ready, says he to the usurper; strike,
 " pierce this breast, deliver me up to the most cruel tortures. I
 " have but one favour to implore of thee: if these children must
 " perish, let us at least be so far indulged as to be put to death
 " before they are: spare us the grief, the horror of beholding
 " them expire, calling in vain for help upon their mother and
 " their grand-father. This granted, complete thy barbarous pur-
 " pose, since we cannot avoid our destiny."

" Add, resumes Megara, another favour to that Amphitryon
 " has implored of thee. Suffer me to adorn these tender victims
 " in their funeral garments; cause the gates of this palace, from
 " whence we have been driven, to be opened to us once more:
 " this is the only part of their father's inheritance which I de-
 " mand for them."

Lycus grants her request, he orders the palace-gates to be opened, and, as he retires, declares, that he will soon return to sacrifice his victims. This is the speech of a tyrant, and exactly in the Grecian manner. Thus the son of Achilles sacrificed Polyxena. Roxana's speech to Bajazet *, when she condemns him to death, has more greatness in it.

Megara, in an agony of grief, causes her children to enter the palace, which was once theirs. As for Amphitryon, he concludes the scene with an angry exclamation against Jupiter, which is alike ridiculous and impious. He reproaches that God with having seduced Alcmena, and yet failing in that gratitude and friendship which he owes her husband.

The interlude is an ode upon the labours of Hercules. The old men, not being able to defend his family, honour it at least with their tears at the sight of Megara, who returns with her three sons in mourning habits, followed by Amphitryon.

ACT II.

" Where is the priest? says Megara as she enters; behold! the
 " victims are ready. Oh! my children, what a fatal union! It
 " is death that will soon join us for ever, and this is the last time
 " I ever shall behold you. Cruel destiny! have I then given
 " you birth, and brought you up with so much care, only to de-
 " vote you to an ignominious death? Was it, oh! was it this
 " your father made me hope for? For thee, alas! (*speaking to*
 " *the eldest* †) he designed the scepter of Argos, the palace of
 " Euristhus, and the skin of the Nemean lion, which he was
 " wont to wear. For thee (*to the second*) he destined his tre-
 " mendous club, and the crown of Thebes, which I brought him
 " in dowry. Oechalia, which he won by his valour, was to have
 " been thy portion (*to the youngest*). Ah! my loved hero, full
 " of his vast designs, would have made each of you a monarch,
 " while it was to have been my pleasing care to chuse you brides
 " worthy of him and you. In secret I fed my delighted fancy
 " with the hope of making your grandeur and your happiness se-
 " cure; a hope founded upon the firm alliance between Athens,
 " Lacedæmon, and Thebes. Vain, vain schemes! All this

* Bajazet, act. v. sc. 4.

† Her three sons are Therimacus, Creontiades, and Deicoon.

" smiling

“ smiling prospect is vanished like a dream. This day’s destiny
 “ gives you the three inevitable Parcæ for brides, and leaves me
 “ only tears to form the nuptial bath*. Your grand-father, in-
 “ stead of an hymenial banquet, offers you a tomb, and gives
 “ you Pluto for a father-in-law. Ah! my dear children, which
 “ of you shall I first embrace? How shall I collect your tears,
 “ and bathe you with mine? Oh! my Hercules, oh! if the
 “ dead can hear our cries, it is thy aid which I implore. Thy
 “ wife, thy father, thy children, are all doomed to the greedy
 “ grave. How was my felicity envied when I became the wife
 “ of such a hero! and now I am doomed to suffer an ignomi-
 “ nious death. Oh! come, my Hercules! come, and succour
 “ thy wretched family: let thy great shade at least appear; thy
 “ shade alone will terrify our cowardly murderers.”

Amphitryon addresses his prayers to Jupiter: “ But, alas! says
 “ he, I have already often in vain implored him.” He then turns
 to the old men, and leaves them a very Epicurean lesson. He
 shews them by his own misfortunes, that nothing is more uncer-
 tain than life, and consequently that they ought to enjoy the pre-
 sent without anxiety and without fear.

In this critical moment, when their fate seems determined,
 Hercules unexpectedly appears. It is Megara who first perceives
 him, and breaks into transports of joy, very difficult to be described.
 She sends her children to meet him, and bids them hang upon
 his garments, nor let go their hold, for he is their deliverer. This,
 after the extreme danger they had been in, makes a beautiful
 situation. Hercules seeing again his palace, cries out: “ Dear
 “ Spouse! with what joy do I behold thee again, after my return
 “ from the gloomy regions of the dead! But, what do I see? My
 “ children crowned and adorned like victims devoted to death!
 “ my wife surrounded by a crowd of men! my father bathed in
 “ tears! Ah! what misfortune must I hear, my dear Megara; say,
 “ what fatal accident has happened to thee?”

Megara tells Hercules the deplorable extremity in which he
 finds his family, the sedition that had been raised in Thebes, the
 revolution by which Lycus had been placed upon the throne, the
 murder of Creon her father, and all its consequences. It is not
 surprising that Hercules should be wholly ignorant of these events;

* This is an allusion to a custom among the Grecian mothers, who bathed themselves
 before the nuptials of their children.

he had entered the city secretly, upon meeting with a presage by a bird, which foretold him that some misfortune was to happen to him, and he had come privately to his own palace: thus it was not possible for him to know any thing that had passed, although he had traversed the whole city. Euripides takes great care to prevent the objection, which would naturally present itself to the mind of the spectator upon this article.

It is Alcides's ignorance of all these events which forms the chief beauty of this scene, for every word that Megara speaks is a new stroke to him: he is not able to suppress his astonishment. "What, says he, have all my friends then forsaken me in my absence?"

MEGARA. Have the miserable any friends?

HERCULES. Have the ungrateful Thebans forgot the benefits I have bestowed upon them?

Hercules had done them some very signal services, particularly by the victory he had gained for them over the people of Orchemena*, whom he forced to pay the Thebans a tribute, double in value to that which the Thebans had formerly paid them.

Hercules, full of grief and resentment, tears the fatal fillets off the heads of his children, and all his thoughts run upon the vengeance he resolves to take upon his enemies. To him it seems but small satisfaction to kill the tyrant; he will punish the perfidious Thebans also, as accomplices in those crimes they were base enough not to oppose. He will stain with blood the waters of the Ismenus and Dirce. All his past exploits he thinks will signify nothing, unless he takes a signal vengeance for the injuries his family have suffered.

Amphitryon, who had hitherto been silent, and had left Megara to relate all their calamities, at length takes up the discourse. It was agreeable to dramatic decorum, that a woman, whose sensibility, as she says herself, was great, should express her joy by tender exclamations; and that an old man should content himself with offering his advice upon such an occasion. That which he now gives his son is agreeable to the wisdom and experience of old age. He would not have a hero, like him, expose himself to the brutal rage of a multitude of desperate men, loaded with debts, whose crimes, poverty, and love of innovations had, he said,

* Orchemena, a city of Boeotia, in which was a fine temple, dedicated to the Graces.

attached them to the tyrant's interests. "It is not to be doubted," adds he, but that they have seen thee enter the city, and this "is sufficient to make them take up arms against thee." "What matters it, says Hercules, whether they have seen me, or not?" This answer, so full of noble pride, is worthy of Hercules. However, he assures his father, that his arrival was known to no person whatever, as we have before observed. It is on account of this circumstance, and that he may strike a sure blow, that he consents to follow his father's advice, and wait for the coming of Lycus.

During this short interval, Euripides allows the curiosity of Amphytrion, to be satisfied, who is with reason astonished at his son's return from the shades. Alcides tells him, that he entered the kingdom of Pluto, and delivered Theseus from thence, and that he had carried Cerberus, the infernal dog, by force into a forest. All this is related in very few words, for it would neither have been proper for Hercules, in the situation he was now, to dwell long upon these wonderful exploits, nor to have entirely omitted them, since his family had lost all hopes of ever seeing him more. All the decorums which nature and good sense dictate, are here exactly observed. Nothing can be more natural than these overflowings of joy in a family upon the point of destruction, unexpectedly preserved by a deliverer whom they thought dead. Round Hercules, who appears to their eyes as a Divinity, his wife and children press with anxious solicitude, trembling still at the dangers they had so lately escaped, all the horrors of which are renewed by reflection. They embrace him, they hang upon his arms, as if they feared to lose him again. This shews him the excess of despair to which they had been reduced; his soul is filled with sympathizing grief, he comforts them, he wipes away their tears, and tenderly intreats them not to hang upon his garments, since it is not his intention to quit them. Hercules is not ashamed to shew himself a father; he supports the character with an air, which exalts that of a hero. "Riches, says he, and poverty distinguish ranks among mortals; but paternal tenderness reduces all to an equality." After these words they all retire into the palace to wait for the tyrant's return.

The subject of this second interlude is not more interesting than the former, at least according to our taste; it is a song of joy and triumph, which turns upon the advantages of youth and vigour. The old men wish that youth had been eternal, that good men might

might enjoy a double portion of it; for how, they say, can the just be distinguished from the wicked, since the Gods suffer all alike to grow decrepid with age? It must be remembered, that these sentiments are expressed by old men and pagans. They conclude with the usual maxim, which is to indulge mirth, and cultivate the muses; and they earnestly wish, that the subject of their songs may be the triumph of the great Alcides.

A C T III.

Lycus now appears, and, keeping up his brutal character, summons Amphitryon whom he sees coming out of the palace, to deliver up to him Megara and her children, according to his promise, to the end that he may sacrifice them. Impatient to satisfy his cruelty and revenge, he thinks the time long which the victims have employed in adorning themselves for their funerals. Amphitryon dissembles with Lycus, the better to draw him into the snare that is laid for him. Sophocles makes Electra act the same part towards Egisthus.

Lycus, uneasy at this delay, enters the palace to fetch his victims, without suspecting the fate that waits him there. Amphitryon remains a moment afterwards upon the stage with the Chorus. Prayers for the success of this enterprize, congratulations from the old men, fear, hope, and anxious expectation, all prepare this great turn of affairs. But scarce has Amphitryon re-entered the palace, when the piercing cries of Lycus are heard. The Chorus now break into songs of joy, and look upon Thebes as a kingdom delivered from a barbarous usurper. It is a kind of diversion as in an opera. There are many of this kind in our poet, to fill the vacancies left by the principal actors, when they are employed behind the scenes. These are short interludes, but very different from those sung between the acts, and only introduced to inform the spectators of facts which could not be represented upon the stage, such, for example, as the murder of Lycus here.

Iris, the messenger of Juno, appears in the air with one of the Furies; and here Euripides enters into the marvellous part of the fable, and in reality changes both the subject and the action. For, Lycus being killed, and the family of Hercules delivered, the whole appears to be finished; and yet the tragedy is advanced no farther than the third act. Possibly what is now to come may be connected

connected with what is past ; but the object is not the same. For Juno, still the implacable and declared enemy of Hercules, not having been able to destroy him either by his journey to hell, nor by means of Lycus's usurpation, resolves, by plunging him into a new calamity, to make him pay dear for the pleasure he had enjoyed in preserving his family from death. Her intention is to make Hercules murder with his own hands that wife and those children, whom he had solately and so gloriously delivered. Iris says this plainly, and commands the Fury, in the name of Juno, to strike the hero with madness. The Fury (who would have thought it!) moved with compassion, cannot resolve to exercise this barbarity upon a man so useful to mortals, and even to the Gods ; he who in the region of hell had been revered like Orpheus. However, Iris insists upon her obedience : " This is not, says she, a time to " deliberate ; I bring thee the orders of Juno, execute them im- " mediately ; strange as they appear, a real good will result from " them." The Fury takes the Sun to witness, that she obeys with regret. However, she does what is required of her, and instantly possesses the senses of Hercules ; while Iris, having executed her commission, takes her flight back to heaven.

The old men, who had heard the whole dreadful scheme, fall back into their former sorrow. Already they fancy, they behold a horrible massacre, and hear a loud and unusual noise in the palace. This is said to shew, that the commands of Juno are obeyed.

A C T IV.

Accordingly, an officer comes out of the palace to tell these old men, that Hercules, seized with a divine fury, has killed his children with his own hands. The account he gives of this bloody deed, is as lively and natural a picture as any we have seen in Euripides : yet, doubtless there are some things in it which shocks the delicacy of our manners. The following is part of this narration, from whence the reader may judge of the whole.

" A sacrifice, says the officer, was offered to Jupiter, to purify
 " the palace polluted with the blood of Lycus. Hercules stood
 " near the altar, surrounded with his family. The sacred baskets
 " were brought, and all who were present, kept a religious silence.
 " The hero, preparing to quench the sacred brand in the lustral wa-
 " ter, in order to purify those who assisted at the sacrifice, stopped on
 " a sudden, his children, struck with astonishment, gazed on him
 " Vol. IH. O " eagerly ;

“eagerly; when in an instant his eyes rolled in a hideous manner, and appeared suffused with blood; his lips were covered with foam, which ran down upon his beard, and with a forced and convulsive smile he cried: O father Jupiter! why do I stop to offer expiatory sacrifices before I have offered up to thee the blood of Euristhus? Come, let us sacrifice this other victim as we have done Lycus; and when I have brought hither the head of this enemy, then it will be time for me to purify my hands. Take away these vases, pour the lustral water upon the ground; it is my bow and arrows that I want. Where are my arms? I am going to Mycena. Let us bring all things necessary to lay the city level with the ground.”

The officer adds, that Hercules leaving the altar, fancied he was seated upon his car, and animated his steeds. The slaves seeing this, laughed, and whispered one to the other: “Surely, our master is in a merry humour, or else he is really mad.” These are some of those plain and simple passages of which we think, it may be justly said, that they are unworthy of the majesty of the buskin, though they occur very often in the ancients. But, on the other side, if we judge of them on this principle, our determination will be wrong. That which is here comic, was not always so; many customs, ridiculous in our eyes now, were serious and respectable but fifty years ago. This is a plain and just comparison, the force of which it is not easy to resist.

The rest is a circumstantial account of the follies committed by Hercules; for so I call his frantic actions, because there is not that nobleness in them as in the wild sallies of Orestes in Racine’s *Andromache*; therefore the Greek poet has not exposed them upon the stage. Hercules enters an apartment of his palace; one moment he believes he is with the Megareans, another that he is in Corinth, then at Mycena. He pulls off his robes, he aims his idle blows at the air, and fancies that he has gained a great victory. His father presents himself to his view, and endeavours to recall him to reason; but Hercules takes him for Euristhus, and his own children for the sons of his enemy. Armed with his bow, he pursues them with eager haste; one hides himself beneath his mother’s robe, another takes refuge behind a pillar, and a third underneath the altar.

The afflicted mother in vain cries out: “Alas! it is thy children thou wouldst murder.” Furious he runs after one of them, who stood behind the pillar, and kills him: he next pierces

pierces the breast of him who had hid himself underneath the altar, and flies towards the third; but Megara fortunately escaped with the child: she ran out of the apartment, and barred the door upon her distracted husband. Hercules now thought himself at the gates of Mycena; he bursts the bars, he forces himself a passage, and, with one stroke, kills the mother and the child. He was preparing the same fate for his father, when Pallas stopped him, and threw him on the ground. "At length, adds the officer, he lies buried in a profound sleep; and when we were a little recovered from our terror, we bound him to the ruins of the pillar." Hercules, in plain words, ought to have been chained up for a madman, he was even worse than Orlando Furioso. These strokes of Euripides must not be imitated in our time; but let us not too easily believe, that they were faulty in his.

The Chorus, who declare this to be a more shocking deed than that of the Danaides, who murdered their husbands, or of Progne, who killed her own child, continue fixed in astonishment and terror. Immediately the palace-gates are thrown open to increase the impression by the sight of the dreadful effects of Alcides' madness: Doors broke in pieces, pillars overthrown, the lifeless bodies of Megara and her children lying extended on the ground, Hercules sleeping bound to a pillar, Amphitryon in an agony of grief, and the whole apartment covered with blood; such is the spectacle represented in the following scene.

The unhappy father, whose emotions hinder him as yet from feeling the whole weight of his calamities, trembles, lest Hercules should awake, and put all to fire and sword. This scene is exactly in the same taste with that of Tecmessa in the *Ajax* of Sophocles, vol. II. and of Phædra in the *Hippolitus* of Euripides, vol. I. In a word, it is an artifice of the ancient stage, whereon the Chorus and Amphitryon alike seem agitated with terror and grief, as if it was not a feigned representation, but a real action. Mean time Hercules awakes, and his senses are restored to him.

Astonished, as may be well imagined, at the condition he finds himself in, lying on the ground, bound to a pillar, his bow at a distance, and his arrows scattered here and there, he is ready to imagine, that he is descended to the regions of the dead. "Where am I?" says he. Amphitryon and the old men approach him trembling. "Why dost thou weep, my father?" says Hercules: "Why dost thou stand at a distance from me?" The father utters a cry of grief, followed by some interrupted words, which

convince the son, that some fatal accident has happened. Being now calm and composed, they unbind him, and sighing tell him, that Juno has let loose all her rage upon him. "Turn hither" thine eyes, says Amphytrion to him, behold these bodies." Hercules is thunderstruck at this sight, and new horrors seize him when he is informed, that he alone had been the author of all this slaughter. He is not able to recollect the least trace of what he has done. The whole is disintangled by sprightly questions and answers, easy and natural to the last degree, and which pierce Hercules as so many invenomed wounds. Too well informed of his misfortune, he resolves to die; he abandons himself to the most cutting remorse, he thinks of nothing but how to get rid of a miserable being, and utters nothing but dreadful exclamations. Just as he is upon the point of murdering himself, he sees Theseus suddenly appear; shame and confusion succeed to rage and grief; he wraps his garments round his head, lest the sight of him only, he says, should pollute this beloved friend.

A C T V.

Theseus addresses himself first to Amphytrion, to whom he declares, that, upon a report which was spread at Athens, that Lycus had usurped the crown of Thebes, he had come with his troops to the assistance of Hercules, his friend. Then looking round him, he perceives a woman and three boys lying slaughtered upon the ground. At first he imagines he is come too late to succour his friend, and that it is Lycus who has shed all this blood; then he fancies, that he is mistaken, and that these melancholy accidents have been caused by some other misfortune which he had not yet heard of.

Amphytrion, with tears and sighs, unfolds the whole mystery. Theseus, full of grief for his friend's misfortune, and the rage of the inexorable Juno, conjures Hercules to unveil his face; he begs his father to obtain this favour for him. The old man makes use of the most affecting intreaties; he groans, he weeps, he implores. "O my son! cries he, hide not thyself thus! Look up and behold again the light of day! My request ought with thee to have the weight of prayers and intreaties. Yet to these I submit, to move thee; nay, I will fall at thy feet, I will embrace thy knees. O my son! suppress this dreadful remorse, which wrings thy soul, which makes thee groan like a lion. Do not
"encou-

"encourage these melancholy thoughts, these fatal designs; nor put the last hand to our calamities."

Hercules answers only with groans. Theseus joins his intreaties to those of Amphitryon. "Unfortunate prince, says he, at least shew thyself to thy friend. Ah! there is no darkness that can hide thy woes from me. Why dost thou make a sign to me to look upon the blood thou hast shed? Dost thou imagine, that Theseus, moved by an idle fear of polluting himself, is capable of abandoning thee? No, no; thy friend will partake thy woes. Alas! if I have again recovered my liberty, if I am delivered from my bondage in the infernal regions, is it not to thee that I owe this happiness? Detested by me are those base pretenders to friendship, whose gratitude time can weaken, whose affection is never seen but in the sun-shine of fortune, and dares not meet the storms of calamity. Rise, my dear Alcides! unveil thy face: look upon thy father, upon thy friend, and remember that it is the part of a hero to bear with fortitude those afflictions which are sent him by the Gods."

HERCULES. Ah! Theseus, hast thou beheld the bleeding bodies of my slaughtered sons?

THESEUS. I have heard all, I have seen all.

HERCULES. Why then wouldst thou force me to see the sun again?

THESEUS. What is it thou fearest; can that Deity be polluted by a mortal's looks?

HERCULES. Fly, my Theseus, fly the contagious woes of a wretch like me?

THESEUS. Me dost thou bid fly! me dost thou bid to abandon thee! Theseus can fear no contagion, no profanation, in a friend.

HERCULES. How noble, how generous is thy friendship! and I, Theseus, it must be confessed, have proved my love for thee.

THESEUS. Therefore I ought to shew my gratitude, in sympathizing at least with thee in thy calamities.

HERCULES. I am indeed an object of compassion; my children are murdered by my own hands.

THESEUS. The knowlege of other's misfortunes, make me more sensible of thine.

HERCULES. How! dost thou know a wretch more miserable than Hercules?

THESEUS. No, I do not say so; thy woes exceed all I have ever heard of.

HERCULES. Therefore I have resolved to die.

THESEUS.

THESEUS. Dost thou think the Gods are to be moved by thy threats?

HERCULES. The Gods brave me, and I would brave them.

THESEUS. Oh hold, my friend, and do not draw upon thyself still greater miseries.

HERCULES. * I have already reached the summit of misfortune, I can fear nothing now.

THESEUS. Sentiments like these, are unworthy of a hero?

HERCULES. Ah! thou advisest well, but thou art not unhappy!

THESEUS. Is it Hercules whom I hear? Hercules, who has endured with fortitude so many calamities.

HERCULES. How light were all my afflictions compared to what I suffer now?

THESEUS. Does such despair suit the deliverer of the earth! that hero whom —

HERCULES. I have conferred many benefits on mortals: but they forsake me, and Juno triumphs in my fall.

THESEUS. No, Greece will never endure that Hercules should sink under calamity, and sacrifice his life to sorrow.

HERCULES. Hear me, Theseus, it is easy for me to overthrow all thy arguments, and to prove to thee that I ought to die; nay, that it would have been better if I had never lived.

Here he enumerates the misfortunes that had attended him from the first moment of his life. He goes back to the source of them all, he recounts his labours, and all the cruel effects of Juno's enmity towards him, for what, he says, has he not suffered?

Memorem Junonis ob iram. †

* This line of Euripides is produced by Longinus as an example of the sublime, arising from the disposition of words, which he compares to a mixture of just proportions. "Thus, says he, if the parts of the sublime were separated from each other, the sublime flies into the air; for, consisting in a body formed by the union of proper parts in harmonious proportions, the mere turn of the period produces loftiness and energy." Here he quotes this verse of Hercules:

Τίμω κακῶν δῖς, κ' οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅττι τιδῶ.

Which Boileau has translated with less vigour in two lines, being constrained by the nature of the French language:

*Tant de maux à la fois sont entrés dans mon-
ame,*

Que je n'y puis loger de nouvelles douleurs.

† Æneid. lib. i.

Ber

But his last misfortunes appear to him more insupportable than all the others. He afterwards proceeds to shew the necessity he is under of killing himself. He can stay no longer in Thebes, and alas! what should he do there? What temple, what assembly can he now dare to frequent? Shall he go to Argos? that he is not permitted to do: he must fly from every place which he had a right to suppose his own country. What foreign city then will give him a retreat? What reception has he reason to expect from strangers? Will they not point him out to one another with detestation? It is hard, he says, for a warrior, who has acquired so much glory, to behold himself fallen into ignominy and contempt. The whole earth will bear witness against him, to deprive him of the hope of any refuge: his fate will be like that of Ixion's, whose wheel expresses perpetual instability.

"No, pursues he, it is decreed, that I must snatch myself for ever from the sight of Greece. What should I gain by pre-serving an useless life loaded with the guilt of murder? Let Juno enjoy her triumph. She takes a barbarous delight in ruining the greatest of the Greeks, and yet she still has altars among us."

Theseus agrees that all the calamities his friend has suffered proceed from the implacable Juno; he acknowledges that it is easier to give advice to the miserable, than to know how to bear miseries with fortitude. "But, adds he, there is no mortal, nor, if we believe the poets, no God, who is exempted from misfortune." This assertion he supports upon the examples of the unlawful marriages among the Gods, and their injustice and cruelty towards fathers. "Yet, says he, they dwell in the heavens, and can console themselves for the disgrace they incur by their crimes." Such doctrine as this is conclusive for a mortal like Hercules; but it is not the less surprising, that such free language was permitted on a pagan stage. We shall hereafter see the reason of it. Theseus, after many more consolatory speeches, proceeds, like a true friend, to actions. He consents that Hercules should quit Thebes, since the law requires it should be so; but he offers him a secure retreat at Athens, where he shall hold a rank, estates, and honours worthy of the great Alcides. It is by benefits like these that the king of Athens seeks to perpetuate his gratitude.

The answer made by Hercules is very remarkable. "The examples of the Gods, says he, which thou hast quoted, are foreign to my misfortune. I will not believe that they are ca-
pable

“ pable of committing the crimes which are attributed to them ;
 “ nor is it possible to comprehend how one Divinity can be sub-
 “ jected to another. A God, if really so, must be all-powerful,
 “ and independant. Let us not give credit to the ridiculous fables,
 “ invented by the poets.” Here we see polytheism plainly over-
 thrown, and this on a public theatre, in the presence of a whole
 nation of pagans. Thus it appears, that true, or at least reasonable
 sentiments of the Divinity were not confined to a small number
 of philosophers, but generally spread throughout Greece ; and as
 for the fables, they left them to the caprice of the poets, who com-
 posed for the stage. *See the end of the Third Volume.*

Hercules, being at last persuaded, that if, through an excess of
 grief, he should resolve to put an end to his life, it would brand him
 with cowardice, accepts the retreat offered him by his friend, and
 returns him thanks for his generosity. “ But, alas ! adds he, I am
 “ incapable of receiving comfort. Hitherto I have surmounted
 “ innumerable calamities, not one of which could force a groan
 “ from me ; never did I imagine I could be reduced to shed tears :
 “ the day is come that sees me weep, and I must yield to fortune.
 “ O father ! in me thou beholdest a parricide and a fugitive, do
 “ what the laws forbid me to do. Mourn for these dear innocents
 “ whom I have ignorantly butchered ; bury them upon the bosom
 “ of their mother, and pay them the last sad duties. These pious
 “ rites performed, reign over this city, and, though wretched,
 “ assume courage, like me, to endure life. O my sons ! ye loved
 “ victims of a father’s frenzy, of a father who has murdered you ;
 “ you have not enjoyed the fruits of his labour and fame ! O my
 “ wife ! ill hast thou been rewarded for thy fidelity and tender
 “ cares ; have I then lost thee for ever ! for ever are we separated,
 “ my dear Megara ! Fatal adieu ! O melancholy embrace ! Alas !
 “ my arms have served me but too well, ought I to resume them ?
 “ Ah ! these arrows will incessantly upbraid me with my guilt.
 “ Barbarian, will they seem to say, we were the instruments of thy
 “ wild rage, by us thou didst murder thy wife and children.”

He afterwards, with a sigh, takes up his bow and arrows, that
 he may not expose himself to the danger of falling disgracefully
 by the hands of his enemies, for want of those arms by which
 he had performed so many glorious exploits. He intreats Theseus,
 to go with him to Argos, to present to Euristhus the infernal dog
 Cerberus, which he had dragged from hell at the command of
 that prince. Setting the fable aside, this spoils a pretty passage.

Lastly,

Lastly, he conjures the Thebans to honour the funerals of his wife and children with their tears, and to weep for him also. "For," "alas!" says he, "Juno has struck us all, and all of us may be ranked among the dead."

Theseus interrupts him, not willing to let him longer indulge his sorrows: he begs him to rise, and supports him with his arm as one weakened with excess of grief. Hercules applauds the generous tenderness of his friend; but before he departs, he would once more look upon his dead wife and children, and Theseus insists upon their being removed from his sight. However, he permits him to embrace his father; but that he may not nourish his grief, he presses him to depart, he insists upon it, and, by tender reproaches, obliges Hercules by degrees to resume his wonted fortitude. The hero, after having, according to his father's request, promised to pay him funeral rites, at length goes away with his friend, comparing himself to a vessel shattered in a storm. "Ah! how miserable," says he as he retires, "are they who prefer riches or fame to a true friend!" On this thought the moral of the tragedy seems to be founded, since, from the beginning to the end, all seems disposed to introduce Theseus to wind up the catastrophe.

HERCULES MAD:

A
TRAGEDY WRITTEN BY SENECA.

IN this tragedy, whether written by Seneca the philosopher, or Seneca the tragedian, or by any other of the several writers who all go under the same name, the subject is exactly the same with that of the *Hercules Mad* of Euripides, but the conduct of it is very different.

ACT I.

Juno, as is usual with this poet, fills up the whole first act. She declaims a long time, and that is all: not but there are some fine passages, and worthy the pen of Seneca, in this speech: but under all these shining verses, there is nothing affecting, nothing that realises the representation. Juno, envious of the glory Hercules had acquired, resolves to deprive him of his senses, and to make him kill his wife and children, after having delivered them out of the power of the usurper Lycus. This is all that is necessary to be known in order to understand it; but Seneca relates it in no less than one hundred and twenty-four killing iambs.

“I, says the Goddess, who am the sister of Jupiter, for this title
“is all that I have left, have quitted the ethereal abode and my
“perfidious husband, to dwell on earth, ever since his mistresses
“have been exalted to the heavens.” Here she enumerates all the
signs of the celestial globe, and very learnedly handles the ancient
fables. “Every part of heaven, she says, is distinguished with
“Jupiter’s amours, and that God has deified all his mistresses and
“their children.” But what grieves the jealous Goddess most, is
to see Alcides, the son of her hated rival Alcmena, meriting by
new exploits, that place which the Destinies have promised him in
heaven. “In vain, says she, have I wearied myself in finding out
“labours

"labours for him; he enjoys my rage, and acquires glory by my hatred." All his noble actions, which Juno recalls to remembrance, are so many incitements to stop the course of his fame. "He has vanquished hell, says she, and nothing now remains for him to do, but to attempt the conquest of heaven itself, and force his father to resign his scepter. He has supported the vault of heaven, and myself who walk upon it, and without doubt he will force his way to the Gods." Juno then animates herself to vengeance; she considers, whether she shall not free the Titans, to oppose him. "Vain resource! he has already subdued them. There is no one can be opposed to him but himself: let him become his own foe."

Juno, fixed in this resolution, invokes, in a storm of words, the Eumenides and all the powers of hell to her assistance. Sure there needed not all this bustle to disturb the reason of one mortal! She does yet more, she will herself guide his destroying hand, and execute the crime which is to cover him with infamy, and render him unworthy of heaven. What name can we give to such an abominable Divinity? The Greek tragic poets attributed passions and frailties to their Gods; but they palliated or disguised them, either well or ill. There is an atrociousness too evident in the practice of Juno, which would scarce be excused in a woman mad with despair.

The Chorus, who enter afterwards, do nothing throughout the whole piece, and speak only for the sake of speaking. They are Thebans, who, delighted at beholding the appearance of the day again, give a fine description of the rising sun, and of all the objects re-animated by it. They afterwards expatiate upon the cares and inquietudes of the great, which they compare with the calm happiness of inferior stations: they do not spare even Alcides himself, whom they blame for his visit to the infernal regions; as if he had by that means hastened his death, which, say they, always comes too soon. In a word, the song of this Chorus is nothing more than a series of Sentences, common enough, but elegantly expressed.

A C T II.

Megara now comes to declaim in her turn; she raises her voice with a

O magne Olympi rector & mundi arbiter!

It is the sovereign of the Gods, whom she implores, to put an end to her miseries, and restore Hercules to her again. These two petitions are lost amidst a hundred and thirteen verses, many of which are very fine, but in the whole they contain little or nothing. Here follow some sparks of his wit: "With Hercules the end of one enterprize is a step towards new dangers. At his return, he finds his enemy prepared to engage him; and before he can meet him, another war calls him back. He knows no leisure, no rest, but during the time that is taken up in laying new commands upon him. Juno, who ever since his birth has been endeavouring to destroy him, would not suffer his infancy to be idle: he subdued monsters even before he knew what they were." She speaks of the serpents, of which a poet * of our own age says so elegantly,

*Et les couleurs étouffées
Furent les jeux de son berceau.*

"Hercules was then preparing for the combat of the Hydra." *Prælusit Hydra.* He recounts the twelve labours in a style that never sinks, and concludes with this verse,

Quid ista profunt? orbe defenso caret.

"What has he gained by so many glorious exploits? He no longer enjoys that world, of which he was the deliverer." Megara supposes that he is detained in the infernal regions, as Phædra imagines that Theseus is, when she speaks in this manner to Hippolitus:

*L'on ne voit point deux fois le rivage des morts
Seigneur; puisque Thésée a vu les sombres bords,
N'espérez pas qu'ici jamais on le revoye,
Et l'avare Achéron ne lâche point sa proie †.*

Megara says, that during the unfortunate absence of her husband, she has seen not only Creon, his father, but all his brothers put to death by the usurper. This she ought to have acquainted the audience with sooner, and not to have mingled in her complaints things which were quite foreign to the subject, such as the fable of Amphion, who, by the sound of his lyre, built the walls of Thebes.

* M. Rousseau.

† Phædra, act ii. sc. 5.

" Oh ye Cadmean race ! continues Megara, Oh city of Amphion !
 " into what miseries are ye plunged ! Ye are subjected to the
 " will of a despicable stranger, who is become your tyrant ; while
 " the hero, who traverses the land and sea to punish criminals, and
 " who, wherever he is, overthrows tyranny, is, though absent, a
 " slave, and bears a yoke from which he has freed so many na-
 " tions."

Nunc servit absens, fertque quæ ferri vetat.

Megara declares, that she hopes Hercules will again behold the
 day ; that if he finds no path from hell, he will make one for him-
 self. " Force thy way through the earth, my dear husband ! cries she ;
 " break through the infernal darkness ; and if every passage is shut
 " against thee, crush the terrestrial globe to open thyself a way !"

Orbe diducta redi.

What extravagance ! but Megara would have her husband do
 more still ; she bids him " drag after him all who are shut up in
 " the prisons of eternal night ; Death, and the nations which for
 " so many ages have been buried in his shade." To make this
 thought more extraordinary, as if it was not already sufficiently so,
 she supports it by an incredible instance of the power of Hercules :
 she calls upon him to remember that glorious exploit of his, when
 with his hand he threw down whole mountains, and rent the
 vale of Tempe, to open a new bed for a river. All these extra-
 vagant wishes, however, end in her ardent desire to see Hercules
 again. But is not this to abuse common sense ? and would it not
 have been better to have made Megara, as Euripides has done, con-
 fine herself to prayers and wishes, such as nature and grief would
 suggest ? How much more naturally does Ovid make Penelope
 complain of the absence of Ulysses ? There is, in the reproaches
 and expostulations which he puts into her mouth, a melody and
 sweetness which pleases alike the heart and the ear. In the two
 first verses of her epistle, she says more than Megara in forty. An
 author, who was very young, paraphrased the thought in such a
 manner as exceeded all the rest of his poem, which he afterwards
 effaced by his tears ; however, the first verses are certainly worth
 preserving :

*Reçois, mon cher Ulysse, un tendre souvenir,
 Des beaux nœuds dont l'hymen a voulu nous unir.*

Et

*Et si ta Pénélope a pour toi quelques charmes,
Viens calmer ses douleurs, viens essuyer ses larmes ;
Ne crois pas qu'une Lettre en arrête le cours ;
C'est Ulysse que j'aime Et non pas ses discours.*
*Hanc tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulysse ;
Nil mihi rescribas attamen : ipse veni.*

If Ovid often scatters antitheses and sparkling thoughts amidst the transports of a passion, he appears rather to meet them, than to go in search of them ; and besides, he is more moderate and less exaggerating than Seneca, who chuses rather to form wild and extravagant conceits, than to be reduced to simplicity of thoughts. The wit of Ovid seldom affects the sensations, which he intends to excite, but Seneca raises sensations as false and extravagant as his thoughts. Once by the way we may easily conclude how different the genius of the Latin stage, while it was in the hands of Ovid and his cotemporaries, was from that on which Seneca and his cotemporaries proceeded.

The following scenes begin to have the air of a dialogue. Amphitryon comes to console Megara upon the hope of her husband's return. " Ah ! replies she, the unfortunate are always the dupes of their own hopes." " The very contrary, says Amphitryon, is true, for they are oftner deceived by their fears." These two sentences make up the subject of this scene. For Megara cannot persuade herself, that it is possible for Hercules, in the center of the earth, and overwhelmed with such a weight, to force himself a passage to the light. The old man, to encourage her, reminds her of the astonishing exploits performed by Alcides, who, he says, when his ship was wrecked, passed through the Lybean sea on foot.

Here Lycus appears, and interrupts this short conversation : however, he gives Megara time to tell the audience in six verses, that Lycus is the usurper of the Theban scepter. He also speaks a soliloquy, in which he describes himself as such, by sentences worthy of his character. He acknowledges, that he has no right to the crown of Thebes by birth ; but alleges, that to him force holds the place of every other claim, that security is to be found in arms alone, and that arms are the only support of a throne. He is, however, desirous of supplying the defect in his own birth by marrying Megara ; and being now master of a powerful kingdom, he

he cannot fear that she will refuse him her hand; but, if she does, he is resolved to revenge the affront by extirpating the whole race of Hercules. It is this incident alone which belongs to Seneca, and it is happily imagined. For, besides that probability is not wounded by the passion of Lycus for Megara, it gives the poet greater scope for his imagination, and some colour to the cruelty of the tyrant, who, in Euripides, seems actuated by a motive too base and inhuman for any man, however wicked, to avow. Lycus, therefore, taking advantage of this opportunity, approaches Megara, who had retired to the altar with her father-in-law.

The tyrant does not tell her, as in the Greek tragedy, that he is come to sacrifice her to his policy; on the contrary, he makes her a very submissive and artful declaration. Racine seems to have imitated this passage in his *Andromache*, when he makes Pyrrhus speak thus:

*Hé quoi, votre courroux n'a-t-il pas eu son cours?
Peut-on haïr sans cesse, Et punir-on toujours?**

Megara answers very differently from *Andromache*; and she has a tyrant to deal with far less generous than Pyrrhus. "To me, says she, dost thou offer a hand stained with the blood of my father, and my brothers! Ah! rather let the whole universe be overthrown!" (Thus I translate five or six Latin passages, which all mean the same thing.) "Thou hast robbed me of my father, my brothers, my throne, and my country; but one blessing thou hast left me, more valuable than all I have lost, which is my hatred of thee; a blessing I prize so much, that unwillingly I share it with the whole Theban people." She goes on to place before the eyes of the usurper the many atrocious crimes that had been committed in Thebes, which the Gods had punished, and foretells that a like fate is reserved for him, whose guilt is still greater.

The answer Lycus makes is very poor; for he acknowledges that he despises the laws, and yet he attempts to justify the deaths of Creon and his sons. "They fell, says he, in war; the rage of fight cannot be restrained. They defended their crown against my attacks, and, perhaps, I am an usurper; but it is the success, and not the motive, which stamps a name upon our actions." He concludes with declaring, that it will be wisdom

* *Androm.* act i. sc. 4.

in Megara to forget all the past, and yield to her conqueror, who does not wish to see her his captive, but his bride; and lastly, instead of blaming the haughtiness of Megara, he thinks it renders her more worthy of his love.

The widow of Hercules confirms her denial with execrations. Lycus threatens her; she defies him. He attempts to depreciate the birth and exploits of Alcides; Amphitryon refutes all his censures upon these two articles. This is a close and spirited dispute, but the subject of it is trifling and uninteresting, because founded upon a ridiculous fable. Seneca, it is true, has borrowed this of Euripides; but of a bad thing he has made a worse: for, in the Latin tragedy, Hercules is strongly attacked, and very strongly defended.. "Ought we, says Lycus, to dignify with the title of "hero a warrior who forsook his club and his lion's skin for Tyrian ornaments? who was not ashamed to perfume his hair, to "bind a thin veil over his sun-burnt forehead, and move to the "sound of a Lydian flute those arms celebrated by so many glorious exploits?" What answer does Amphitryon make to these reproaches? Why, instead of denying a charge so disgraceful to Alcides, he endeavours to excuse him by pleading the example of Bacchus, and, with great simplicity, adds that he, who had endured such great fatigues, had need of some relaxation. Lycus at length treats the old man and Megara with the most brutal insolence: and this is sufficient to shew that the author of this piece understood little of the dramatic art with regard to the manners; the following verse, spoke by Lycus, puts it past a doubt.

Vel ex coacta nobilem partum feram.

That is, that he will gratify his passion by force, and give himself an heir of an illustrious blood. Megara now invokes the shades of Creon, Oedipus, and the whole race of Labdacus, and declares that she will make the number of the Danaides complete. Her meaning is, that she will not scruple to kill such a husband as Lycus, and do what Hypermnestra alone refused to do.

The tyrant's love changes to fury: he commands his guards to encompass the altar with fire, that the whole remaining family of Hercules may be consumed. Amphitryon in vain implores him to put him first to death. The old man has no resource but in Hercules, whom he invokes with loud cries. Already he imagines that the earth trembles, and that the heavens open to his view.

The

The Chorus then declaim as usual, and after loading Fortune with imprecations, they likewise invoke the shade of Hercules, beseeching him to force his way from the infernal regions. The example of Orpheus, upon which they dwell a long time, gives them reason to hope, that Pluto will be no less charmed with valour than with harmony:

*Quæ vinci potuit regia cantibus,
Hæc vinci poterit regia viribus.*

A C T III.

This act, in which Hercules begins to play his part, is ridiculous in proportion to the nobleness and grandeur of that scene in Euripides, upon which it is founded. Hercules appears, followed by Theseus. But, how is he represented? like a hero who comes to deliver his family from approaching death? No; but like a true declaimer, who is to display incredible actions, which has nothing to do with the business in hand. He addresses himself to the Sun and to Jupiter, asking pardon of them for exposing to their view a horrible monster, capable of inspiring them with terror. This is Cerberus. He implores them to turn away their eyes from a sight so hideous, which it is only fit for Juno and himself to behold. He has pierced through the thick darkness of Tartarus, and he declares that he might, if he pleased, have tumbled Pluto from his throne, he who has conquered Destiny and Death; and he defies Juno to impose any labour upon him which he cannot now accomplish.

But not to dwell longer upon these extravagant boasts. He perceives at last his palace, surrounded with guards; he draws nearer: Amphytrion knows him by his broad shoulders and his enormous club.

*Tunc es? agnosco toros,
Humerosque, & alto nobilem trunco manum.*

This certainly is not in the spirit of Euripides, whom the Latin poet intends to imitate in this scene. The only trace of him we can find is in this short account which Amphytrion gives of what has happened: "Creon is murdered; Lycus reigns over Thebes, "and he is upon the point of slaughtering thy wife, thy children, "and thy father." To this, Hercules, that he may be concise
Vol. III. Q in

in his turn, instead of expressing any surprise natural enough at such news, and which Euripides so beautifully describes, hastily answers, that he will go and kill the usurper.

Theseus offers his sword upon this occasion, that he may spare him this action, unworthy of so great a hero. "No, replies Alcides, it belongs to me to sacrifice Lycus; I will send him to declare to Pluto, that Hercules is returned to the earth." Accordingly Hercules declines the embraces of his father and his wife, and hastens away to execute his scheme.

The best of it is, that Theseus, to complete the romantic absurdity of so wild an enterprise, comforts Megara and Amphitryon effectually by this short argument, "I know Hercules; Lycus will be sacrificed to the shade of Creon. But, why do I say, will be sacrificed? he dies: but this is too little; he is already dead."

*Si novi Herculem,
Lycus Creonti debitas pœnas dabit;
Lentum est, dabit, dat; hoc quoque est lentum; dedit.*

The passage in the *Miser* of Moliere*, where he says, *I am dying, I am dead, I am under ground*, was probably taken from this scene; but, in Moliere, a foolish fellow in a rage is made to speak according to his character. Theseus ought to express himself, if not like a king, yet like a man of sense at least. This whole scene, which ought to have been the most interesting in the tragedy, is impertinent and trifling. For, Hercules having appeared, and disappeared again like lightning, what have Theseus, Megara, and Amphitryon to say, which can recompense the audience for the absence of that hero? This conversation, be it what it will, cannot but seem tedious; but as Seneca has managed it, it is intolerable. Megara and Amphitryon forget that but a moment before they were in danger of being put to a cruel death; they are content with the return of Hercules, and his resolution to kill their persecutor; and, without being in the least anxious about the success of his enterprise against Lycus, amuse themselves with asking Theseus questions concerning his journey to the infernal regions, like little children, who listen with eager curiosity to the tales of persons returned from long voyages.

* *Act iv. sc. 7.*

Theseus,

Theseus, who shews himself to be a very prolix narrator, foolishly counterfeits fear of entering into a detail of his infernal adventures. It becomes necessary to encourage him; and by whom is it that his fears are removed? by persons who had been within an instant of being consumed by fire. Well, his terrors thus cured, he begins with first asking permission "of all *the Deities above and below*, to reveal those secrets which lie hid in the bosom of the "earth." A stroke copied from Virgil, or rather disfigured after so great a master, who says:

*Dii quibus imperium animarum, umbræque silentes;
Et Cabos & Pblegeton, loca nocte silentia late
Sit mihi fas audita loqui, sit numine vestro
Pandere res alta terra & caligine mersas.**

After making this request, Theseus enters upon his career; but the reader will, I hope, dispense with me from following him. It is sufficient to say, that he describes hell by burlesquing Virgil; that Amphitryon puts to him childish questions, which he answers always by telling him fine stories; and that, after taking a long and pompous compass, he also describes more at length the manner in which Hercules subdued Cerberus, and dragged him to earth. Euripides thought a slight mention of such a fable sufficient, tho' it was received among the ancients; but the Latin poet was of opinion, that it deserved all the ornament he could give it, in order to make it one of the most shining passages in his play; and did not perceive, that, by his fondness for declaiming, he has spoiled one of the most beautiful passages in his model; and that he has fallen into that very error which Horace attributes to novices in poetry:

Your opening promises some grand design,
And shreds of purple with broad lustre shine,
Sew'd on your poem. Here, in labour'd strain,
A sacred grove, or fair Diana's fane
Rises to view; there, through delicious meads
A murmuring stream its winding water leads;
Here pours the rapid Rhine, the watry bow
There bends its colours, and with pride they glow.

* Virgil, *Æneid*. lib. vi. v. 264.

Beauties they are, but beauties out of place :
 For though your talent be to paint with grace
 A mournful cypress, would you pour its shade
 O'er the tempestuous deep, if you were paid
 To paint a sailor, 'midst the winds and waves,
 When on a broken plank his life he saves?
 Why will you thus a mighty vase intend,
 If in a worthless bowl your labours end?
 Then learn this wand'ring humour to controul,
 And keep one equal tenour through the whole.

FRANCIS.

It appeared to me necessary to give these lines of Horace here, because they paint so exactly that fault which the author of the Latin tragedies almost always falls into. And now, to lull the audience quite to sleep, the Chorus return, and, with their ordinary length of words, sing the praises of Hercules; they particularly celebrate his triumphant return from the infernal regions.

ACT IV.

Hercules appears again, covered with the blood of Lycus, and of all those who were about the tyrant when he attacked him. His first care is to thank the Gods for this victory. He invokes them all, except those who were the children of Juno, styling them his brothers. He commands his attendants to bring incense, and to lead the victims to the altar. But, to pursue the style of Seneca, for victims he demands whole flocks, and all the incense India and Arabia produce. Theseus, animated with the same spirit of devotion, invokes the Gods as well as his friend. Amphitryon in vain intreats his son to defer the sacrifice till he has taken some repose, and purified his bloody hands. Hercules replies :
 " A more acceptable victim than a tyrant cannot be offered to Jupiter ; why have I not him to sacrifice at this altar ? "

Accordingly he begins the sacrifice by a prayer, which, he says, is worthy of him ; and so indeed it is. He implores the Gods to free the whole universe from its evils ; when instantly seized with a terrible stupefaction, his senses are disordered, and every object he beholds is different from what it really is. He fancies himself involved in darkness ; then he imagines he sees the celestial lion, that lion which he overcame in the forest of Nemea, ready to run
 over

over the signs of autumn and winter, to devour the bull, the sign of the spring. Certainly this is a very learned madness; and here we plainly discover the author of the *Hercules Oetaeus*, where Hercules in his senses has the same ideas as Hercules here when mad. The similitude of these passages afford more room to believe, that these two tragedies were composed by the same author, than any arguments Heinſius produces to prove the contrary.

In vain does the terrified Amphitryon endeavour to recall his son to reason; his mind grows every moment more disturbed, and exhales itself in the most extravagant fancies. We have an attempt to scale the heavens, a formal siege undertaken; Hercules threatens Juno to burst open the celestial gates, if she obstinately persists in refusing to open them; he even threatens Jupiter with restoring liberty to Saturn; he calls the Titans to his assistance, and declares himself their chief. It is, to conclude, a horrible rattle which rings in the head of a hero run mad. Certainly his frenzy ought to have been made more probable, or he should not have been exposed to public view in such a condition: Seneca should have concealed him, as Euripides judiciously does, though in the Greek tragedy his madness is not so excessive.

In Seneca all these subjects vanish to make room for others, of which the consequences are more fatal. Hercules unfortunately takes it into his head to believe, that his children are the children of Lycus, and that his wife is Juno. Full of this idea, he massacres them all with a pitiless hand. It is true, this passes behind the scene; for Amphitryon enters, drowned in tears, to relate what he had beheld. He had seen Megara with her children running from place to place, to save herself and them, while Hercules as eagerly pursued to kill them. This melancholy description strikes the spectators as much as if they beheld the blood of these unhappy victims streaming before their eyes; and it cannot be denied but that this theatrical artifice is extremely fine. Hercules, at length wearied out, falls into a kind of lethargy, as in the Greek tragedy: so that the stage being no longer in emotion, the Chorus have leisure to utter their lamentations, which are almost as ridiculous as the extravagant sallies of the hero.

A C T V.

Hercules awakes; and here every circumstance that follow is exactly the same as in the Greek tragedy, that is to say, natural enough.

enough. We even find some strokes here which are not in the original. Alcides perceiving that he is disarmed, "Who is it, says he, that has conquered me? Some other Hercules without doubt; but let him shew himself. Let him appear, he who has not trembled to approach Hercules when asleep." Then seeing the lifeless bodies of his wife and children, "Ah! resumes he, what new Lycus has subjected Thebes, and prepared these horrors for me?" He flies from place to place in search of this murderer, no one daring to present himself before him: at length he meets Theseus and his father, who veil their faces, and weep. At this sight his amazement increases; they speak to him in ambiguous terms, and those interrupted with sighs. He discovers one of his arrows in the breast of one of his sons, and now he begins to have some notion of the crime he has committed; the tears of Amphitryon and Theseus unfold the whole mystery. "Am I their murderer?" cries he, approaching them. They make no answer. "Ah! resumes he, it is so, I am the guilty wretch." His remorse is a new fit of frenzy. He implores Jupiter to strike him with his thunder. He would take the place of Prometheus upon mount Caucasus. He wishes to be bound to the Cyanean rocks, that when they meet he may be crushed in pieces. He resolves to expire in flames: in a word, he will give back Hercules to the infernal regions. I have borrowed his terms, but it is impossible to give them all their energy in a translation. Amphitryon observes, that Alcides's madness, instead of being dissipated, has only changed its object by turning on himself; and he has the more reason for judging so, as that Hercules continues his horrible invocations of Hell, the Furies, Erebus, and whatever there is most dreadful in all these: but he mixes as usual some ridiculous images; he would burn his club, his arrows, and even the hands of Juno, who conducted them with such dreadful exactness.

Theseus at length ventures to speak to him to make him comprehend, that this calamity was the effect of frenzy, not of meditated guilt. But Hercules continues obstinately resolved to die. He insists upon their delivering back his arms to him; his resolution is taken. Amphitryon endeavours to dissuade him from his fatal purpose, and conjures him to live, by all that he holds most sacred and most dear. "No, no, answers Hercules, there is nothing in this world to detain me now. Fame, reason, honour, arms, wife, children, valour, even madness itself, I
" have

" have lost them all : nothing can now prevail upon me, nothing
 " can efface my guilt but death."

But wouldst thou, says Theseus, be the murderer of thy father?

HERCULES. It is to avoid that crime that I would die.

THESEUS. What, before a parent's eyes?

HERCULES. I have used them to behold such deeds.

AMPHITRYON. Think of thy glorious exploits, and pardon in
 thyself an involuntary crime.

HERCULES. Does it then become Hercules to pardon crimes
 in himself, who never spared guilt in another?

He persists in demanding his arrows, that he may pierce his
 own breast ; and Theseus urges him to make a noble effort over
 his grief, to subdue himself, and consent to live. But all his ar-
 guments are fruitless. " Should I consent to live, answers Her-
 " cules, my guilt is voluntary ; if I die, it is no longer so."

Si vivo, feci scelera ; si morior, tuli.

Determined to die, he lets loose all the wildness of his rage ; he
 threatens to overthrow the forests of Parnassus and mount Cith-
 eron, to raise for himself a funeral pile ; to pull down the temples
 of the Gods, nay, all Thebes, that expiring under it, it may serve
 him for a tomb : but, if Thebes, with its seven gates, its ramparts,
 and its towers, should be a weight too inconsiderable for his
 shoulders, that he may be more surely knocked on the head, he
 is resolved to break in two the axle of the world. This, we find,
 is a resolution formed in earnest ; for Amphitryon, who considers
 it as such, and hopeless of ever being able to vanquish his obsti-
 nacy, takes up one of Alcides's arrows to pierce his own bosom.
 " Behold, says he to him, the arrow, with which Juno by thy
 " hands struck one of thy sons, its point is turned against thy
 " father." Theseus, to alarm Hercules the more by this menace,
 counterfeits terror : but Alcides yields only to utter a single word,
 when he is asked what he decrees, " Nothing, says he, my
 rage is safe."

In this delicate conjuncture, when Amphitryon, prepared to
 strike, redoubles his intreaties and threats for the last time, his
 son suffers himself to be overcome, and implores mercy of his
 father for his father himself. He desires Theseus to raise the ve-
 nerable old man ; his own hands, he says, are too much polluted

to

to permit him to offer him his assistance. Reluctantly he yields to their intreaties, and his resolution to endure life he considers as a greater effort than any of his labours. The father kisses the hand of his son, as a support which he had unexpectedly recovered. But Hercules, restored to his reason, and unwillingly to life, knows not to what place he shall banish himself, to be out of the view of men. He invokes with geographical exactness all the rivers in the world to wash away his guilt, and all the most distant countries of it to conceal him; and sighing, concludes that the vastness of his renown deprives him even of the consolation of an obscure banishment.

Ubique notus perdidit exilio locum.

Here Theseus interrupts his friend by offering him a retreat in Athens, "A city, says he, which knows how to clear the innocence of Gods themselves:" for, according to the fable, Mars had been absolved there at the tribunal of the Areopagus. The king of Athens takes Hercules away, and with this the tragedy concludes.

END OF THE TRAGEDIES.

THE



ADVERTISEMENT.

I CONCLUDE this work, according to my promise, with an account of the *Comic Theatre*, and intreat the reader, whether a favourer or an enemy of the ancient drama, not to pass his censure upon the authors, or upon me, without a regular perusal of this whole work. For, though it seems to be composed of pieces of which each may preceed or follow without dependance upon the other, yet all the parts, taken together, form a system which would be destroyed by their disjunction. Which way shall we come at the knowledge of the ancient shews, but by comparing together all that is left of them? The value and necessity of this comparison determined me to publish all, or to publish nothing. Besides, the reflections on each piece, and on the general taste of antiquity, which, in my opinion, are not without importance, have a kind of obscure gradation, which I have carefully endeavoured to preserve, and of which the thread would be lost by him who should slightly glance sometimes upon one piece, and sometimes upon another. It is a structure which I have endeavoured to make as near to regularity as I could, and which must be seen in its full extent and in proper succession. The reader, who skips here and there over the book, might make a hundred objections which are either anticipated, or answered in those pieces which he might have overlooked. I have laid such stress upon the connection of the parts of this work, that I have declined to exhaust the subject, and have suppressed many of my notions, that I might leave the judicious reader to please himself by forming such conclusions as I supposed him likely to discover, as well as myself. I am not here attempting to prejudice the reader by an apology either for the ancients, or my own manner. I have not claimed a right of obliging others to determine, by my opinion, the degree of esteem which I think due to the authors of the Athenian stage; nor do I think that their reputation in the present time, ought to depend upon my mode of thinking or expressing my thoughts, which I leave intirely to the judgment of the public.

A DIS-

DISSERTATION

UPON THE

GREEK COMEDY.

I WAS in doubt a long time, whether I should meddle at all with the Greek Comedy, both, because the pieces which remain are very few, the licentiousness of Aristophanes, their author, is exorbitant, and it is very difficult to draw from the performances of a single poet, a just idea of Greek comedy. Besides, it seemed that tragedy was sufficient to employ all my attention, that I might give a complete representation of that kind of writing, which was most esteemed by the Athenians and the wiser Greeks *, particularly by Socrates, who set no value upon comedy or comic actors. But the very name of that drama, which in polite ages, and above all others in our own, has been so much advanced, that it has become equal to tragedy, if not preferable, incline me to think that I may be partly reproached with an imperfect work, if, after having gone as deep as I could into the nature of the Greek tragedy, I did not at least sketch a draught of the comedy.

I then considered, that it was not wholly impossible to surmount, at least in part, the difficulties which had stopt me, and to go somewhat farther than the learned writers †, who have published in French some pieces of Aristophanes; not that I pre-

Reasons
why Aristo-
phanes may
be reviewed
without trans-
lating him
entirely.

* There was a law which forbade any judge of the Areopagus to write comedy.

† Madame Dacier, M. Boivin.

tend to make large translations. The same reasons which have hindered me with respect to the more noble parts of the Greek drama, operate with double force upon my present subject. Tho' ridicule, which is the business of comedy, be not less uniform in all times, than the passions which are moved by tragic compositions; yet, if diversity of manners may sometimes disguise the passions themselves, how much more greater change will be made in jocularities? The truth is, that they are so much changed by the course of time, that pleasantry and ridicule become dull and flat much more easily than the pathetic becomes ridiculous.

That which is commonly known by the term jocular and comic, is nothing but a turn of expression, an airy phantom, that must be caught at a particular point. As we lose this point, we lose the jocularity, and find nothing but dulness in its place. A lucky fall, which has filled a company with laughter, will have no effect in print, because it is shewn single and separate from the circumstance which gave it force. Many satirical jests, found in ancient books, have had the same fate; their spirit has evaporated by time, and have left nothing to us but insipidity. None but the most biting passages have preserved their points unblunted.

But, besides this objection, which extends universally to all translations of Aristophanes, and many allusions of which, time has deprived us, there are loose expressions thrown out to the populace to raise laughter from corrupt passions, which are unworthy of the curiosity of decent readers, and which ought to rest eternally in proper obscurity. Not every thing in this infancy of comedy was excellent, at least it would not appear excellent at this distance of time, in comparison of compositions of the same kind, which lie before our eyes; and this is reason enough to save me the trouble of translating, and the reader that of perusing. As for that small number of writers who delight in those delicacies, they give themselves very little trouble about translations, except it be to find fault with them; and the majority of people of wit like comedies that may give them pleasure, without much trouble of attention, and are not much disposed to find beauties in that which requires long deductions to find it beautiful. If Helen had not appeared beautiful to the Greeks and Trojans but by force of argument, we had never been told of the Trojan war.

On the other side, Aristophanes is an author more considerable than one would imagine. The history of Greece could not pass over him, when it comes to touch upon the people of Athens; this

this alone might procure him respect, even when he was not considered as a comic poet. But when his writings are taken into view, we find him the only author from whom may be drawn a just idea of the comedy of his age; and farther, we find in his pieces, that he often makes attacks upon the tragic writers, particularly upon the three chief, whose valuable remains we have had under examination; and, what is yet worse, fell sometimes upon the State and upon the Gods themselves.

II. These considerations have determined me to follow, in my representation of this writer, the same method which I have taken in several tragic pieces, which is that of giving an exact analysis as far as the matter would allow, from which I deduce four important systems. First, Upon the nature of the comedy of that age, without omitting that of Menander*. Secondly, Upon the vices and government of the Athenians. Thirdly, Upon the notion we ought to entertain of Aristophanes, with respect to Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Fourthly, Upon the jest which he makes upon the Gods. These things will not be treated in order, as a regular discourse seems to require, but will arise sometimes separately, sometimes together, from the view of each particular comedy, and from the reflections which this free manner of writing will allow. I shall conclude with a short view of the whole, and so finish my design.

The chief heads of this discourse.

* Menander, an Athenian, son of Diopethes and Hegestrates, was apparently the most eminent of the writers of the new comedy. He had been a scholar of Theophrastes: his passion for the women brought infamy upon him: he was squint-eyed, and very lively. Of the one hundred and eighty comedies, or, according to Suidas, the eighty which he composed, and which are all said to be translated by Terence, we have now only a few fragments remaining. He flourished about the 115th Olympiad, 318 years before the christian era. He was drowned as he was bathing in the port of Piræus. I have told in another place, what is said of one Philemon, his antagonist, not so good a poet as himself, but one who often gained the prize. This Philemon was older than him,

and was much in fashion in the time of Alexander the Great. He expressed all his wishes in two lines, "To have health, and fortune, and pleasure, and never to be in debt, is all I desire." He was very covetous, and was pictured with his fingers hooked, so that he set his comedies at a high price. He lived about a hundred years, some say a hundred and one. Many tales are told of his death: Valerius Maximus says, that he died with laughing at a little incident: seeing an ass eating his figs, he ordered his servant to drive her away; the man made no great haste, and the ass eat them all. "Well done," says Philemon, "now give her some wine." Apuleius and Quintilian placed this writer much below Menander, but give him the second place.

History of
comedy.

III. I shall not repeat here what madame Dacier, and so many others before her, have collected of all that can be known relating to the history of comedy. Its beginnings are as obscure as those of tragedy, and there is an appearance that we take these two words in a more extensive meaning; they had both the same original, that is, they began among the festivals of the vintage, and were not distinguished from one another but by a burlesque or serious Chorus, which made all the soul and all the body. But, if we give these words a stricter sense, according to the notion which has been since formed, comedy was produced after tragedy, and was in many respects a sequel and imitation of the works of Eschylus. It is in reality nothing more than an action set before the sight, by the same artifice of representation. Nothing is different but the object, which is merely ridicule. This original of true comedy will be easily admitted, if we take the word of Horace, who must have known better than us the true dates of dramatic works. This poet supports the system which I have endeavoured to establish in the second discourse * so strongly as to amount to demonstrative proof.

Horace † expresses himself thus: "Thespis is said to have been the first inventor of a species of tragedy, in which he carried about in carts players smeared with the dregs of wine, of whom some sung, and others declaimed." This was the first attempt both of tragedy and comedy; for Thespis made use only of one speaker, without the least appearance of dialogue. "Eschylus afterwards exhibited them with more dignity. He placed them on a stage, raised somewhat above the ground, covered their faces with masks, put buskins on their feet, dressed them in trailing robes, and made them speak in a more lofty style." Horace omits invention of dialogue, which we learn from Aristotle ‡. But, however, it may be well enough inferred from the following words of Horace; this completion is mentioned while he speaks of Eschylus, and therefore to Eschylus it must be ascribed: "Then first appeared the old comedy, with great success in its beginning." Thus we see that the Greek comedy arose after tragedy, and by consequence tragedy was its parent. It was formed in imitation of Eschylus, the inventor of the tragic drama; or, to go yet higher into antiquity, had its original from Homer,

* Part I. vol. i.

† Hor. Poet. v. 275.

‡ Poet. ch. 4.

who

who was the guide of Eschylus. For, if we credit Aristotle *, comedy had its birth from the *Margeles*, a satirical poem of Homer, and tragedy from the *Iliad* and *Odyssæy*. Thus the design and artifice of comedy were drawn from Homer and Eschylus. This will appear less surprising, since the ideas of the human mind are always gradual, and arts are seldom invented but by imitation. The first idea contains the seed of the second; this second, expanding itself, gives birth to a third; and so on. Such is the progress of the mind of man; it proceeds in its productions step by step, in the same manner as nature multiplies her works by imitating, or repeating her own act, when she seems most to run into variety. In this manner it was that comedy had its birth, its increase, its improvement, its perfection, and its diversity.

Who is author of comedy.

IV. But the question is, who was the happy author of that imitation, and that shew, whether only one like Eschylus of tragedy, or whether they were several? for neither Horace, nor any before him, explained this †. This poet only quotes three writers who had reputation in the old comedy, Eupolis ‡, Cratinus ||, and Aristophanes, of whom he says, "That they, and others who wrote " in the same way, reprehended the faults of particular persons

* Poet. ch. 4.

† "The alterations, which have been made in tragedy, were perceptible, and the authors of them unknown; but comedy has lain in obscurity, being not cultivated, like tragedy, from the time of its original: for it was long before the magistrates began to give comic Chorusses. It was first exhibited by actors, who played voluntarily, without orders of the magistrate. From the time that it began to take some settled form, we know its authors, but are not informed who first used masks, added prologues, increased the number of the actors, and joined all the other things which now belong to it. The first that thought of forming comic fables, were Epicharmus and Phormys, and consequently this manner came from Sicily: Crates was the first Athenian that adopted it, and forsook the practice of gross raillery that prevailed before." Aristot.

ch. 5. Crates flourished in the 82d Olympiad, 450 years before our æra, twelve or thirteen years before Aristophanes.

‡ Eupolis was an Athenian; his death, which we shall mention presently, is represented differently by authors, who almost all agree that he was drowned. Elian adds an incident which deserves to be mentioned: He says (book x. Of animals), that one Angeas of Eleusis, made Eupolis a present of a fine mastiff, who was so faithful to his master as to worry to death a slave who was carrying away some of his comedies. He adds, that when the poet died at Egens, his dog staid by his tomb till he perished by grief and hunger.

|| Cratinus of Athens, who was son of Calimedes, died at the age of ninety-seven. He composed twenty comedies, of which nine had the prize; he was a daring writer, but a cowardly warrior.

" with

“with excessive liberty.” These are probably the poets of the greatest reputation, though they were not the first, and we know the names of many others*. Among these three we may be sure that Aristophanes had the greatest character, since not only the king of Persia † expressed a high esteem of him to the Grecian ambassadors, as of a man extremely useful to his country; and Plato ‡ rated him so high, as to say, that the Graces resided in his bosom; but likewise, because he is the only writer of whom any comedies have made their way down to us, through the confusion of times. There are not indeed any proofs that he was the inventor of comedy, properly so called, especially since he had not only predecessors who wrote in the same kind, but it is at least a sign, that he had contributed more than any other to bring comedy to the perfection in which he left it. We shall, therefore, not inquire farther, whether regular comedy was the work of a single mind, which seems yet to be unsettled, or of several contemporaries, such as these which Horace quotes. We must distinguish three forms which comedy wore, in consequence of the genius of the writers, or of the laws of the magistrates, and the change of the government of many into that of few.

The old,
middle, and
new comedy.

V. That comedy ||, which Horace calls the ancient, and which, according to his account, was after Eschylus, retained something of its original state, and of the licentiousness which it practised, while it was yet without regularity, and uttered loose jokes and abuse upon the passers-by from the cart of Thespis. Though it was now properly modelled, as might have been worthy of a great theatre and a numerous audience, and deserved the name of a regular comedy, it was not yet much nearer to decency. It was a representation of real actions, and exhibited the dress, the motions, and the air, as far as could be done in a mask, of any one who was thought proper to be sacrificed to public scorn. In a city so free, or to say better, so licentious as Athens was at that time, nobody was spared, not even the chief magistrate, nor the very judges, by whose voice comedies were allowed or prohibited. The info-

* Hertelius has collected the sentences of fifty Greek poets of the different ages of comedy.

† Interlude of the second act of the comedy intitled *The Acharniens*.

‡ Epigram attributed to Plato.

|| This history of the three ages of comedy, and their different characters, is taken in part from the valuable fragments of Platonius.

lence

lence of those performances reached to open impiety, and sport was made equally with men and Gods*. These are the features by which the greatest part of the compositions of Aristophanes will be known. In which it may be particularly observed, that not the least appearance of praise will be found, and therefore certainly no trace of flattery or servility.

This licentiousness of the poets, to which in some sort Socrates fell a sacrifice, at last was restrained by a law. For the government, which was before shared by all the inhabitants, was now confined to a settled number of citizens. It was ordered, that no man's name should be mentioned on the stage; but poetical malignity was not long in finding the secret of defeating the purpose of the law, and of making themselves ample compensation for the restraint laid upon authors, by the necessity of inventing false names. They set themselves to work upon known and real characters, so that they had now the advantage of giving a more exquisite gratification to the vanity of poets, and the malice of spectators. One had the refined pleasure of setting others to guess, and the other that of guessing right by naming the masks. When pictures are so like, that the name is not wanted, no body inscribes it. The consequence of the law, therefore, was nothing more than to make that done with delicacy, which was done grossly before; and the art, which was expected would be confined within the limits of duty, was only partly transgressed with more ingenuity. Of this Aristophanes, who was comprehended in this law, gives us good examples in some of his poems. Such was that which was afterwards called the middle comedy.

The new comedy, or that which followed, was again an excellent refinement, prescribed by the magistrates, who, as they had before forbid the use of real names, forbid afterwards real subjects, and the train of Chorusses† too much given to abuse: so that the poets saw themselves reduced to the necessity of bringing imaginary names and subjects upon the stage, which at once purified and enriched the theatre; for comedy from that time was no longer a fury armed with torches, but a pleasing and innocent mirror of human life.

* It will be shewn how and in what sense this was allowed.

† Perhaps the Chorus was forbid in the

middle age of the comedy. Platonius seems to say so.

*Chacun peint avec art dans ce nouveau mirair
 S'y vit avec plaisir, ou crut ne s'y pas voir !
 L'avare des premiers rit du tableau fidelle
 D'un avare souvent tracé sur son modèle,
 Et mille fois un fat finement exprimé
 Méconnut le portrait sur lui-même formé*.*

The comedy of Menander and Terence is, in propriety of speech, the fine comedy. I do not repeat all this after so many writers but just to recall it to memory, and to add to what they have said, something which they have omitted, a singular effect of public edicts appearing in the successive progress of the art. A naked history of poets and of poetry, such as has been often given, is a mere body without soul, unless it be enlivened with an account of the birth, progress, and perfection of the art, and of the causes by which they were produced.

The Latin
comedy.

VI. To omit nothing essential which concerns this part, we shall say a word of the Latin comedy. When the arts passed from Greece to Rome, comedy took its turn among the rest: but the Romans applied themselves only to the new species, without Chorus or personal abuse; though perhaps they might have played some translations of the old or the middle comedy, for Pliny gives an account of one which was represented in his own time. But the Roman comedy, which was modelled upon the last species of the Greek, hath nevertheless its different ages, according as its authors were rough or polished. The pieces of Livius Andronicus †, more ancient and less refined than those of the writers who learned the art from him, may be said to compose the first age, or the old Roman comedy and tragedy. To him you must join Nevius his cotemporary, and Ennius, who lived some years after him. The second age comprises Pacuvius, Cecilius, Accius, and Plautus, unless it shall be thought better to reckon Plautus with Terence, to make the third and highest age of the Latin comedy, which may properly be called the new comedy, especially with regard to Terence, who was the friend of Lelius, and the faithful copier of Menander.

* Despreaux *Art Poet. chant. 8.*

† The year of Rome 514, the first year of the 135th Olympiad.

But

But the Romans, without troubling themselves with this order of succession, distinguished their comedies by the dresses * of the players. The robe, called *Prætexta*, with large borders of purple, being the formal dress of magistrates in their dignity, and in the exercise of their office, the actors, who had this dress, gave its name to the comedy. This is the same with that called *Trabeata* †, from *Trabea*, the dress of the consuls in peace, and the generals in triumph. The second species introduced the senators not in great offices, but as private men; this was called *Toges*, from *Togata*. The last species was named *Tabernaria*, from the tunic, or the common dress of the people, or rather from the mean houses which were painted on the scene. There is no need of mentioning the farces, which took their name and original from *Atella*, an ancient town of Campania in Italy, because they differed from the low comedy only by greater licentiousness; nor of those which were called *Palliates*, from the Greek, a cloak, in which the Greek characters were dressed upon the Roman stage, because that habit only distinguished the nation, not the dignity or character, like those which have been mentioned before. To say truth, these are but trifling distinctions; for, as we shall shew in the following pages, comedy may be more usefully and judiciously distinguished, by the general nature of its subjects. As to the Romans, whether they had, or had not, reason for these names, they have left us so little upon the subject which is come down to us, that we need not trouble ourselves with a distinction which affords us no solid satisfaction. Plautus and Terence, the only authors of whom we are in possession, give us a fuller notion of the real nature of their comedy, with respect at least to their own times, than can be received from names and terms, from which we have no real exemplification.

VII. Not to go too far out of our way, let us return to Aristophanes, the only poet in whom we can now find the Greek comedy. He is the single writer, whom the violence of time has in some degree spared, after having buried in darkness, and almost in forgetfulness, so many great men, of whom we have nothing but the names and a few fragments, and such slight memorials as

The Greek comedy is reduced only to Aristophanes.

* *Prætextæ, Togatæ, Tabernariæ.*

† Suet. *de Claris Grammat.* says, that C. Gelissus, librarian to Augustus, was the author of it.

are scarcely sufficient to defend them against the enemies of the honour of antiquity; yet these memorials are like the last glimmer of the setting sun, which scarce afford us a weak and fading light: yet from this glimmer we must endeavour to collect rays of sufficient strength to form a picture of the Greek comedy approaching as near as possible to the truth.

Of the personal character of Aristophanes little is known; what account we can give of it, must therefore be had from his comedies. It can scarcely be said with certainty of what country he was: the invectives of his enemies so often called in question his qualification as a citizen, that they have made it doubtful. Some said, he was of Rhodes, others of Egena, a little island in the neighbourhood, and all agreed, that he was a stranger. As to himself, he said that he was the son of Philip, and born in the Cydathenian quarter; but he confessed that some of his fortune was in Egena, which was probably the original seat of his family. He was, however, formally declared a citizen of Athens, upon evidence, whether good or bad, upon a decisive judgment, and this for having made his judges merry by an application of a saying of Telemachus*, of which this is the sense: *I am, as my mother tells me, the son of Philip; for my own part, I know little of the matter, for what child knows his own father?* This piece of merriment did him as much good, as Archias received from the oration of Cicero†, who said that that poet was a Roman citizen. An honour which, if he had not inherited by birth, he deserved for his genius.

Aristophanes ‡ flourished in the age of the great men of Greece, particularly of Socrates and Euripides, both of which he outlived. He made a great figure during the whole Peloponesian war, not merely as a comic poet by whom the people were diverted, but as the censor of the government, as a man kept in pay by the state to reform it, and almost to act the part of the arbitrator of the public. A particular account of his comedies will best let us into his personal character as a poet, and into the nature of his genius, which is what we are most interested to know. It will, however, not be amiss to prepossess our readers a little by the

* Homer, *Odyssey*.

† Orat. pro Archia poeta.

‡ In the 85th year of the Olympiad, 437 before our æra, and 317 of the foundation of Rome.

judgments that had been passed upon him by the critics of our own time, without forgetting one of the ancients that deserves great respect.

VIII. "Aristophanes, says father Rapin, is not exact in the contrivance of his fables; his fictions are not probable; he brings real characters upon the stage too coarsely and too openly. Socrates, whom he ridicules so much in his plays, had a more delicate turn of burlesque than himself, and had his merriment without his impudence. It is true, that Aristophanes wrote amidst the confusion and licentiousness of the old comedy, and he was well acquainted with the humour of the Athenians, to whom uncommon merit always gave disgust, and therefore he made the eminent men of his time the subject of his merriment. But the too great desire which he had to delight the people by exposing worthy characters upon the stage, made him at the same time an unworthy man; and the turn of his genius to ridicule was disfigured and corrupted by the indelicacy and outrageousness of his manners. After all, his pleasantry consists chiefly in new coined puffy language. The dish of twenty-six syllables, which he gives in his last scene of his Female Orators, would please few tastes in our days. His language is sometimes obscure, perplexed and vulgar, and his frequent play with words, his oppositions of contradictory terms, his mixture of tragic and comic, of serious and burlesque, are all flat, and his jocularities, if you examine it to the bottom, is all false. Menander is diverting in a more elegant manner, his style is pure, clear, elevated, and natural, he persuades like an orator, and instructs like a philosopher; and if we may venture to judge upon the fragments which remain, it appears that his pictures of civil life are pleasing, that he makes every one speak according to his character, that every man may apply his pictures of life to himself, because he always follows nature, and feels for the personages which he brings upon the stage. To conclude, Plutarch, in his comparison of these authors, says, that the muse of Aristophanes is an abandoned prostitute, and that of Menander a modest woman."

Aristophanes
censured and
praised.

It is evident that this whole character is taken from Plutarch. Let us now go on with this remark of father Rapin, since we have already spoken of the Latin comedy, of which he gives us a description.

"With

" With respect to the two Latin comic poets, Plautus is inge-
 " nious in his designs, happy in his conceptions, and fruitful of
 " invention. He has, however, according to Horace, some low
 " jocularities, and those smart sayings, which made the vulgar
 " laugh, made him be pitied by men of higher taste. It is true,
 " that some of his jests are extremely good, but others likewise
 " are very bad. To this every man is exposed, who is too much
 " determined to make sallies of merriment; they endeavour to
 " raise that laughter by hyperboles, which would not arise by a
 " just representation of things. Plautus is not quite so regular as
 " Terence in the scheme of his designs, or in the distribution of
 " his acts, but he is more simple in his plot; for the fables of
 " Terence are commonly complex, as may be seen in his *Andrea*,
 " which contains two amours. It was imputed as a fault to Te-
 " rence, that, to bring more action upon the stage, he made one
 " Latin comedy out of two Greek; but then Terence unravels
 " his plot more naturally than Plautus, which Plautus did more
 " naturally than Aristophanes; and though Cæsar calls Terence
 " but one half of Menander, because, though he had softness and
 " delicacy, there was in him some want of sprightliness and strength;
 " yet he has written in a manner so natural and so judicious, that,
 " tho' he was then only a copy, he is now an original. No author
 " has ever had a more exact sense of pure nature. Of Cecilius,
 " since we have only a few fragments, I shall say nothing. All
 " that we know of him, is what is told us by Varrus, that he was
 " happy in the choice of subjects."

Rapin omits many others for the same reason, that we have
 not enough of their works to qualify us for judges. While we
 are upon this subject, it will perhaps not displease the reader to see
 here what that critic's opinion is of *Lopes de Vega* and *Moliere*.
 It will appear, that, with respect to *Lopes de Vega*, he is rather
 too profuse of praise; that in speaking of *Moliere*, he is too parsi-
 monious. This piece will, however, be of use to our design,
 when we shall examine to the bottom what it is that ought to make
 the character of comedy.

" No man has ever had a greater genius for comedy than *Lopes*
 " *de Vega* the Spaniard. He had a fertility of wit, joined with
 " great beauty of conception, and a wonderful readiness of com-
 " position; for he has written more than three hundred comedies.
 " His name alone gave reputation to his pieces; for his reputa-
 " tion was so well established, that a work, which came from his
 " hands,

" hands, was sure to claim the approbation of the public. He
 " had a mind too extensive to be subjected to rules, or restrained
 " by limits. For that reason he gave himself up to his own ge-
 " nius, on which he could always depend with confidence.
 " When he wrote, he consulted no other laws than the taste of
 " his auditors, and regulated his manner more by the success of
 " his work than by the rules of reason. Thus he discarded all
 " scruples of unity, and all the superstition of probability." (This
 is certainly not said with a design to praise him, and must be con-
 nected with that which immediately follows.) " But as for the
 " most part, he endeavours at too much jocularity, and carries
 " ridicule to too much refinement: his conceptions are often
 " rather happy than just, and rather wild than natural; for, by
 " subtilizing merriment too far, it becomes too nice to be true,
 " and his beauties loose their power of striking by being too de-
 " licate and acute."

" Among us, nobody has carried ridicule in comedy farther
 " than Moliere. Our ancient comic writers brought no characters
 " higher than servants, to make sport upon the theatre; but we
 " are diverted upon the theatre of Moliere by marquises and
 " people of quality. Others have exhibited in comedy no species
 " of life above that of a citizen; but Moliere shews us all Paris,
 " and the court. He is the only man amongst us, who has laid
 " open those features of nature by which he has exactly marked,
 " and may be accurately known. The beauties of his pictures
 " are so natural, that they are felt by persons of the least discern-
 " ment, and his power of pleasantry received half its force from
 " his power of copying. His Misanthrope is, in my opinion, the
 " most complete, and likewise the most singular character that has
 " ever appeared upon the stage: but the disposition of his come-
 " dies is always defective some way or another. This is all which
 " we can observe in general upon comedy."

Such are the thoughts of one of the most refined judges of
 works of genius, from which, though they are not all oraculous,
 some advantages may be drawn, as they always make some ap-
 proaches to truth.

Madame Dacier*, having her mind full of the merit of Aristo-
 phanes, expresses herself in this manner: " No man had ever

* Preface to *Plutus*. Paris, 1684.

“ more discernment than him, in finding out the ridiculous, nor
 “ a more ingenious manner of shewing it to others. His remarks
 “ are natural and easy, and, what very rarely can be found, with
 “ great copiousness he has great delicacy. To say all at once, the
 “ Attic wit, of which the ancients made such boast, appears more
 “ in Aristophanes than in any other that I know of in antiquity.
 “ But what is most of all to be admired in him is, that he is
 “ always so much master of the subject before him, that, without
 “ doing any violence to himself, he finds a way to introduce na-
 “ turally things which at first appeared most distant from his
 “ purpose, and even the most quick and unexpected of his desul-
 “ tory sallies appear the necessary consequence of the foregoing
 “ incidents. This is that art which sets the dialogues of Plato
 “ above imitation, which we must consider as so many dramatic
 “ pieces, which are equally entertaining by the action and by the
 “ dialogue. The style of Aristophanes is no less pleasing than his
 “ fancy; for, besides its clearness, its vigour, and its sweetness,
 “ there is in it a certain harmony so delightful to the ear, that
 “ there is no pleasure to that of reading it. When he applies
 “ himself to vulgar mediocrity of style, he descends without
 “ meanness: when he attempts the sublime, he is elevated with-
 “ out obscurity; and no man has ever had the art of blending all
 “ the different kinds of writing so equally together. After having
 “ studied all that is left us of Grecian learning, if we have not
 “ read Aristophanes, we cannot yet know all the charms and
 “ beauties of that language.”

Plutarch's
 sentiment
 upon Aristophanes and
 Menander.

IX. This is a pompous elogium: but let us suspend our opi-
 nion, and hear that of Plutarch, who, being an ancient, well de-
 serves our attention, at least after we have heard the moderns
 before him. This is then the sum of his judgment concerning
 Aristophanes and Menander. To Menander he gives the pre-
 ference, without allowing much competition. He objects to Ari-
 stophanes, that he carries all his thoughts beyond nature, that he
 writes rather to the crowd than to men of character, that he affects
 a style obscure and licentious, tragical, pompous, and mean, some-
 times serious, and sometimes ludicrous, even to puerility; that he
 makes none of his personages speak according to any distinct cha-
 racter, so that in his scenes the son cannot be known from the father,
 the citizen from the boor, the hero from the shopkeeper, or the
 divine from the serving-man. Whereas the diction of Menander,
 which is always uniform and pure, is very justly adapted to diffe-
 rent

rent characters, rising when it is necessary to vigorous and sprightly comedy, yet without transgressing the proper limits, or losing sight of nature, in which Menander, says Plutarch, has attained a perfection to which no other writer has arrived. For, what man, besides himself, has ever found the art of making a diction equally suitable to women and children, to old and young, to divinities and heroes? Now Menander has found this happy secret, in the equality and flexibility of his diction, which, though always the same, is nevertheless different upon different occasions; like a current of clear water (to keep closely to the thoughts of Plutarch), which running through banks differently turned, complies with all their turns backward and forward, without changing any thing of its nature, or its purity. Plutarch mentions it as a part of the merit of Menander, that he began very young, and was stopped only by old age, at a time when he would have produced the greatest wonders, if death had not prevented him. This, joined to a reflection, which he makes as he returns to Aristophanes, shews that Aristophanes continued a long time to display his powers: for his poetry, says Plutarch, is a strumpet that affects sometimes the airs of a prude, but whose impudence cannot be forgiven by the people, and whose affected modesty is despised by men of decency. Menander, on the contrary, always shews himself a man agreeable and witty, a companion desirable upon the stage, at table, and in gay assemblies; an extract of all the treasures of Greece, who deserves always to be read, and always to please. His irresistible power of persuasion, and the reputation which he has had of being the best master of language of Greece, sufficiently shews the delightfulness of his style. Upon this article of Menander, Plutarch does not know how to make an end: he says, that he is the delight of philosophers fatigued with study; that they use his works as a meadow enamelled with flowers, where a purer air gratifies the sense; that, notwithstanding the powers of the other comic poets of Athens, Menander has always been considered as possessing a salt peculiar to himself, drawn from the same waters that gave birth to Venus. That, on the contrary, the salt of Aristophanes is bitter, keen, coarse, and corrosive; that one cannot tell whether his dexterity, which has been so much boasted, consists not more in the characters than in the expression, for he is charged with playing often upon words, with affecting antithetical allusions; that he has spoiled the copies which he endeavoured to take after nature; that artifice in his plays is wickedness, and simplicity, brutishness; that

his jocularity ought to raise hisses rather than laughter; that his amours have more impudence than gaiety; and that he has not so much written for men of understanding, as for minds blackened with envy and corrupted with debauchery.

The justification of Aristophanes.

X. After such a character there seems no need of going further, and one would think that it would be better to bury for ever the memory of so hateful a writer, that makes us so poor a recompense for the loss of Menander who cannot be recalled. But, without shewing any mercy to the indecent or malicious fallies of Aristophanes, any more than to Plautus his imitator, or at least the inheritor of his genius, may it not be allowed us to do, with respect to him, what, if I mistake not, Lucretius* did to Ennius from whose muddy verses he gathered jewels? *Enni de stercore gemmas.*

Besides, we must not believe that Plutarch, who lived more than four ages after Menander, and more than five after Aristophanes, has passed so exact a judgment upon both, but that it may be fit to re-examine it. Plato, the cotemporary of Aristophanes, thought very differently, at least of his genius, for, in his piece called the *Entertainment*, he gives that poet a distinguished place, and makes him speak, according to his character, with Socrates himself; from which by the way it is apparent, that this dialogue of Plato was composed before the time that Aristophanes wrote his *Clouds* against Socrates. Plato is likewise said to have sent a copy of Aristophanes to Dionysius the Tyrant, with advice to read it diligently, if he would attain a complete judgment of the state of the Athenian republic.

Many other scholars have thought, that they might depart somewhat from the opinion of Plutarch. Frischlinus, for example, one of the commentators upon Aristophanes, though he justly allows his taste to be less pure than that of Menander, has yet undertaken his defence against the outrageous censure of the ancient critic. In the first place, he condemns without mercy his ribaldry and obscenity. But this part, so worthy of contempt, and written only for the lower people, according to the remark of Boivin, bad as it is, after all is not the chief part which is left of Aristophanes. I will not say with Frischlinus, that Plutarch seems in this to contradict himself, and in reality commends the poet, when he accuses him of having adapted his language to the stage; by the

* Brumoy has mistaken Lucretius for Virgil.

stage, in this place, he meant the theatre of *farces*, on which low mirth and buffoonry was exhibited. This plea of Frischlinus is a mere cavil; and though the poet had obtained his end, which was to divert a corrupted populace, he would not have been less a bad man, nor less a despicable poet, notwithstanding the excuse of his defender. To be able in the highest degree to divert fools and libertines, will not make a poet: it is not, therefore, by this defence that we must justify the character of Aristophanes. The depraved taste of the crowd, who once drove away Cratinus and his company, because the scenes had not low buffoonry enough for their taste, will not justify Aristophanes, since Menander found a way of changing the taste by giving a sort of comedy, not indeed so modest as Plutarch represents it, but less licentious than before. Nor is Aristophanes better justified by the reason which he himself offers, when he says, that he exhibited debauchery upon the stage, not to corrupt the morals, but to mend them. The sight of gross faults is rather a poison than a remedy.

The apologist has forgot one reason, which appears to me essential to a just account. As far as we can judge by appearance, Plutarch had in his hands all the plays of Aristophanes, which were at least fifty in number. In these he saw more licentiousness than has come to our hands, though in the eleven that are still remaining, there is much more than could be wished.

Plutarch censures him in the second place for playing upon words; and against this charge Frischlinus defends him with less skill. It is impossible to exemplify this in French. But after all, this part is so little, that it deserved not so severe a reprehension, especially since amongst those sayings, there are some so mischievously malignant, that they became proverbial, at least by the sting of their malice, if not by the delicacy of their wit. One example will be sufficient: speaking of the tax-gatherers, or the excise-men of Athens, he crushes them at once by observing, *non quod essent ταμιαί, sed λαμιαί*. The word *lamiae* signified *walking spirits*, which, according to the vulgar notion, devoured men; this makes the spirit of the sarcasm against the tax-gatherers. This cannot be rendered in our language; but if any thing as good had been said in France on the like occasion, it would have lasted too long, and, like many other sayings amongst us, been too well received. The best is, that Plutarch himself confesses that it was extremely applauded. We shall meet with other examples as we proceed in the comedies.

The third charge is, a mixture of tragic and comic style. This accusation is certainly true; Aristophanes often gets into the buskin: but we must examine upon what occasion. He does not take upon him the character of a tragic writer; but, having remarked that his trick of parody was always well received by a people who liked to laugh at that for which they had been just weeping, he is eternally using the same craft; and there is scarce any tragedy or striking passage known by memory by the Athenians, which he does not turn into merriment, by throwing over it a dress of ridicule and burlesque, which is done sometimes by changing or transposing the words, and sometimes by an unexpected application of the whole sentence. These are the shreds of tragedy, in which he arrays the comic muse, to make her still more comic. Cratinus had before done the same thing; and we know that he made a comedy called *Ulysses*, to burlesque Homer and his *Odyssey*; which shews, that the wits and the poets are, with respect to one another, much the same at all times, and that it was at Athens as here. I will prove this system by facts, particularly with respect to the merriment of Aristophanes upon our three celebrated tragedians. This being the case, the mingled style of Aristophanes will, perhaps, not deserve so much censure as Plutarch has vented. We have no need of the Travesty of Virgil, nor the parodies of our own time, nor of the *Lutrin* of Boileau, to shew us that this medley may have its merit upon particular occasions.

The same may be said in general of his obscurity, his meanesses, and his high flights, and of all the seeming inequality of style, which puts Plutarch in a rage. These censures can never be just upon a poet, whose style has always been allowed to be perfectly Attic, and of an Atticism which made him extremely delightful to the lovers of the Athenian taste. Plutarch, perhaps, rather means to blame the Chorusses, of which the language is sometimes elevated, sometimes burlesque, always very poetical, and therefore in appearance not suitable to comedy. But the Chorus, which had been borrowed from tragedy, was then all the fashion, particularly for pieces of satire, and Aristophanes admitted them like the other poets of the old, and perhaps of the middle comedy; whereas Menander suppressed them, not so much in compliance with his own judgment, as in obedience to the public edicts. It is not, therefore, this mixture of tragic and comic that will place Aristophanes below Menander.

The

The fifth charge is, that he kept no distinction of character; that, for example, he makes women speak like orators, and orators like slaves: but it appears by the characters which he ridicules, that this objection falls of itself. It is sufficient to say, that a poet who painted, not imaginary characters, but real persons, men well known, citizens whom he called by their names, and shewed in dresses like their own, and masks resembling their faces, whom he branded in the sight of a whole city, extremely haughty and full of derision; it is sufficient to say, that such a poet could never be supposed to miss his characters. The applause, which his licentiousness produced, is too good a justification; besides, if he had not succeeded, he exposed himself to the fate of Eupolis, who in a comedy, called the *Drowned Man*, having imprudently pulled to pieces particular persons, more powerful than himself, was laid hold of, and drowned more effectually than those he had drowned upon the open stage.

The condemnation of the poignancy of Aristophanes, as having too much acrimony, is better founded. Such was the turn of a species of comedy, in which all licentiousness was allowed; in a nation which made every thing a subject of laughter, in its jealousy of immoderate liberty, and its enmity to all appearance of rule and superiority; for the genius of independancy naturally produces a kind of satire more keen than delicate, as may be easily observed in most of the inhabitants of islands. If we do not say with Longinus, that a popular government kindles eloquence, and that a lawful monarchy stifles it; at least, it is easy to discover by the event, that eloquence in different governments takes a different appearance. In republics it is more sprightly and violent, and in monarchies more insinuating and soft. The same thing may be said of ridicule: It follows the cast of genius, as genius follows that of government. Thus the republican raillery, particularly of the age which we are now considering, must have been rougher, than that of the age which followed it, for the same reason, that Horace is more delicate, and Lucilius more pointed. A dish of satire was always a delicious treat to human malignity; but that dish was differently seasoned, as the manners were polished more or less. By polished manners I mean that good breeding, that art of reserve and self-restraint, which is the consequence of dependance. If one was to determine the preference due to one of those kinds of pleasantry, of which both have their value, there would not need a moment's hesitation, every voice would join
in

in favour of the softer, yet without contempt of that which is rough. Menander will, therefore, be preferred, but Aristophanes will not be despised, especially since he was the first who quitted that wild practice of satirising at liberty right or wrong, and by a comedy of another cast made way for the manner of Menander, more agreeable yet, and less dangerous. There is yet another distinction to be made between the acrimony of the one, and the softness of the other; the works of the one are acrimonious, and of the other soft, because the one exhibited personal, and the other general characters; which leaves us still at liberty to examine, if these different designs might not be executed with equal delicacy.

We shall know this by a view of the particulars; in this place we say only that the reigning taste, or the love of striking likenesses, might justify Aristophanes for having turned, as Plutarch says, art into malignity, simplicity into brutality, merriment into farce, and amour into impudence; if in any age a poet could be excused for painting public folly and vice in their true colours.

There is a motive of interest at the bottom which disposed Elian, Plutarch, and many others, to condemn this poet without appeal. Socrates, who is said to have been destroyed by a poetical attack, at the instigation of two wretches*, has too many friends among good men, to have pardon granted to so horrid a crime. This has filled them with an implacable hatred against Aristophanes, which is mingled with the spirit of philosophy, a spirit wherever it comes, more dangerous than any other. A common enemy will confess some good qualities in his adversary; but a philosopher, made partial by philosophy, is never at rest till he has totally destroyed him who has hurt the most tender part of his heart; that is, has disturbed him in his adherence to some character, which, like that of Socrates, takes possession of the mind. The mind is the freest part of man, and the most tender of its liberties: possessions, life, and reputation, may be in another's power, but opinion is always independant. If any man can obtain that gentle influence, by which he ingratiates himself with the understanding, and makes a sect in a commonwealth, his fol-

* It is not certain, that Aristophanes did procure the death of Socrates: but, however, he is certainly criminal for having, in

the *Clouds*, accused him publicly of impiety. We shall speak of this in the introduction of that comedy.

lowers will sacrifice themselves for him, and nobody will be pardoned, that dares to attack him justly or unjustly, because that truth, real or imaginary, which he maintained, is now become an idol. Time will do nothing for the extinction of this hatred; it will be propagated from age to age; and there is no hope that Aristophanes will ever be treated with tenderness by the disciples of Plato, who made Socrates his hero. Every body else may, perhaps, confess, that Aristophanes, though in one instance a bad man, may nevertheless be a good poet; but distinctions, like these, will not be admitted by prejudice and passion, and one or other dictates all characters, whether good or bad.

As I add my own reasons, such as they are, for or against Aristophanes, to those of Frischlinus his defender, I must not omit one thing, which he has forgot, and which, perhaps, without taking in the rest, put Plutarch out of humour, which is that perpetual farce which goes through all the comedies of Aristophanes, like the character of Harlequin on the Italian theatre. What kind of personages are clouds, frogs, wasps, and birds? Plutarch, used to a comic stage of a very different appearance, must have thought them strange things; and yet stranger must they appear to us, who have a newer kind of comedy, with which the Greeks were unacquainted. This is what our poet may be charged with, and what may be proved beyond refutation. This charge comprises all the rest, and against this I shall not pretend to justify him. It would be of no use to say, that Aristophanes wrote for an age that required shews which filled the eye, and grotesque paintings in satirical performances; that the crowds of spectators, which sometimes neglected Cratinus to throng Aristophanes, obliged him more and more to comply with the ruling taste, lest he should lose the public favour by pictures more delicate and less striking; that in a state, where it was considered as policy to lay open every thing that had the appearance of ambition, singularity, or knavery, comedy was become a haranguer, a reformer, and a public counsellor, from whom the people learned to take care of their most valuable interests; and that this comedy, in the attempt to lead and to please the people, claimed a right to the strongest touches of eloquence, and had likewise the power of personal painting, peculiar to herself. All these reasons and many others would disappear immediately, and my mouth would be stopped with a single word, with which every body would agree: my antagonist would tell me, that such an age was to be pitied, and
passing

passing on from age to age, till he came to our own, he would conclude flatly, that we are the only possessors of common sense; a determination with which the French are too much reproached, and which overthrows all the prejudice in favour of antiquity. At the sight of so many happy touches, which one cannot help admiring in Aristophanes, a man might, perhaps, be inclined to lament that such a genius was thrown into an age of fools: but what age has been without them? And have not we ourselves reason to fear, lest posterity should judge of Moliere and his age, as we judge of Aristophanes? Menander altered the taste, and was applauded in Athens; but it was after Athens was changed. Terence imitated him at Rome, and obtained the preference over Plautus, though Cæsar called him but a demi-Menander, because he appears to want that spirit and vivacity which he calls the *vis comica*. We are now weary of the manner of Menander and Terence, and leave them for Moliere, who appears like a new star in a new course. Who can answer, that in such an interval of time as has past between these four writers, there will not arise another author, or another taste, that may bring Moliere, in his turn, into neglect? Without going further, our neighbours, the English, think that he wants force and fire. Whether they are right, or no, is another question; all that I mean to advance is, that we are to fix it as a conclusion, that comic authors must grow obsolete with the modes of life, if we admit any one age, or any one climate, for the sovereign rule of taste. But let us talk with more exactness, and endeavour by an exact analysis to find out what there is in comedy, whether of Aristophanes and Plautus, of Menander and Terence, of Moliere and his rivals, which is never obsolete, and must please all ages and all nations.

Remarkable
difference
between the
state of come-
dy, and other
works of ge-
nius, with re-
gard to their
duration.

XI. I now speak particularly of comedy; for we must observe, that between that and other works of literature, especially tragedy, there is an essential difference, which the enemies of antiquity will not understand, and which I shall endeavour palpably to shew.

All works shew the age in which they are produced; they carry its stamp upon them; the manners of the times are impressed by indelible marks. If it be allowed, that the best of past times were rude in comparison with ours, the cause of the ancients is decided against them; and the want of politeness, with which their works are charged in our days, must be generally confessed. History alone seems to claim exemption from this accusation. No-
body

body will dare to say of Herodotus or Thucydides, of Livius or Tacitus, that which has been said without scruple of Homer and the ancient poets. The reason is, that history takes the nearest way to its purpose, and gives the characters and practices of nations, be they what they will; it has no dependance upon its subject, and offers nothing to examination, but the art of the narrative. An history of China well written, would please a Frenchman as well as one of France. It is otherwise with mere works of genius, they depend upon their subjects, and consequently upon the characters and the practices of the times in which they were written; this at least is the light in which they are beheld. This rule of judgment is not equitable; for, as I have said over and over, all the orators and the poets are painters, and merely painters. They exhibit nature as it is before them, influenced by the accidents of education, which, without changing it intirely, yet give it, in different ages and climates, a different appearance; but we make their success depend in a great degree upon their subject, that is, upon circumstances which we measure by the circumstances of our own days. According to this prejudice, oratory depends more upon its subject than history, and poetry yet more than oratory. Our times, therefore, shew more regard to Herodotus and Suetonius, than to Demosthenes and Cicero, and more to all these than to Homer or Virgil. Of this prejudice, there are regular gradations; and to come back to the point which we have left, we shew, for the same imperceptible reason, less regard to tragic poets than to others. The reason is, that the subject of their paintings are more examined than the art. Thus comparing the Achilles and Hippolytus of Euripides, with those of Racine, we drive them off the stage, without considering that Racine's heros will be driven off, in a future age, if the same rule of judgment be followed, and one time be measured by another.

Yet tragedy having the passions for its object, is not wholly exposed to the caprice of our taste, which would make our own manners the rule of human kind; for the passions of Grecian heros are often dressed in external modes of appearance that disgust us, yet they break through the veil when they are strongly marked, as we cannot deny them to be in Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The essence then gets the better of the circumstance. The passions are the essence, and the manners are the circumstance. The passions of Greece and France do not so much differ by the particular characters of particular ages, as they agree by the parti-

cipation of that which belongs to the same passion in all ages: Our three tragic poets will, therefore, get clear by suffering only a little ridicule, which falls directly upon their times; but these times and themselves will be well recompensed by the admiration which their art will irresistibly enforce.

Comedy is in a more lamentable situation; for, not only its object is the ridiculous, which, though in reality always the same, is so dependant on custom as to change its appearance with time, and with place; but the art of a comic writer is, to lay hold of that species of the ridiculous which will catch the spectators of the present hour, without regard to futurity. But, though comedy has attained its end, and diverted the pit, for which it was written; if it goes down to posterity, it is in a new world, where it is no longer known; it becomes there quite a foreigner, because there are no longer the same originals, nor the same species of the ridiculous, nor the same spectators, but a set of merciless readers, who complain that they are tired with it, though it once filled Athens, Rome, or Paris, with merriment. This position is general, and comprises all poets and all ages. To say all at once, comedy is the slave of its subject, and of the reigning taste; tragedy is not subject to the same degree of slavery, because the ends of the two species of poetry are different. For this reason, if we suppose that in all ages there are critics who measure every thing by the same rule, it will follow, that if the comedy of Aristophanes be become obsolete, that of Menander likewise, after having delighted Athens, and revived again at Rome, at last suffered by the force of time. The muse of Moliere has almost made both of them forgotten, and would still be walking the stage, if the desire of novelty did not in time make us weary of that which we have too frequently admired.

Those who have endeavoured to render their judgment independent upon manners and customs, and of such men there have been always some, have not judged so severely either of times, or of writers; they have discovered, that a certain resemblance runs through all polished ages, which are alike in essential things, and differ only in external manners, which, if we except religion, are things of indifference; that wherever there is genius, politeness, liberty, or plenty, there prevails an exact and delicate taste, which, however hard to be expressed, is felt by those that were born to feel it; that Athens, the inventress of all the arts, the mother first of the Roman and then of general taste, did not consist of

of stupid savages; that the Athenian and Augustan ages having always been considered as times that enjoyed a particular privilege of excellence, though we may distinguish the good authors from the bad, as in our own days, yet we ought to suspend the vehemence of criticism, and proceed with caution and timidity before we pass sentence upon times and writers, whose good taste has been universally applauded. This obvious consideration has disposed them to pause; they have endeavoured to discover the original of taste, and have found that there is not only a stable and immutable beauty, as there is a common understanding in all times and places, which is never obsolete; but there is another kind of beauty, such as we are now treating, which depends upon times and places, and is therefore changeable. Such is the imperfection of every thing below, that one mode of beauty is never found without a mixture of the other, and from these two blended together results what is called the taste of an age. I am now speaking of an age sprightly and polite, an age which leaves works for a long time behind it, an age which is imitated or criticized when revolutions have thrown it out of sight.

Upon this incontestable principle, which supposes a beauty universal and absolute, and a beauty likewise relative and particular, which are mingled through one work in very different proportions, it is easy to give an account of the contrary judgments past on Aristophanes. If we consider him only with respect to the beauties, which, though they do not please us, delighted the Athenians, we shall condemn him at once, though even this sort of beauty may sometimes have its original in universal beauty carried to extravagance. Instead of commending him for being able to give merriment to the most refined nation of those days, we shall proceed to place that people, with all their atticism, in the rank of savages whom we take upon us to degrade because they have no other qualifications but innocence and plain understanding. But have not we likewise amidst our more polished manners, beauties merely fashionable, which make part of our writings as of the writings of former times; beauties of which our self-love now makes us fond, but which, perhaps, will disgust our grandsons? Let us be more equitable, let us leave this relative beauty to its real value more or less in every age; or, if we must pass judgment upon it, let us say that these touches in Aristophanes, Menander, and Moliere, were well struck off in their own time; but, that comparing them with true beauty, that part of Aristophanes was

a colouring too strong, that of Menander was too weak, and that of Moliere was a peculiar varnish formed of one and the other, which, without being an imitation, is itself inimitable, yet depending upon time, which will efface it by degrees, as our notions, which are every day changing, shall receive a sensible alteration. Much of this has already happened since the time of Moliere, who, if he was now to come again, must take a new road.

With respect to unalterable beauties, of which comedy admits much fewer than tragedy, when they are the subject of our consideration, we must not too easily set Aristophanes and Plautus below Menander and Terence. We may properly hesitate with Boileau, whether we shall prefer the French comedy to the Greek and Latin. Let us only give, like him, the great rule for pleasing in all ages, and the key by which all the difficulties in passing judgment may be opened. This rule and this key are nothing else but the ultimate design of the comedy.

*Etudiez la cour, & connoissez la ville :
L'une & l'autre est toujours en modèles fertile.
C'est par-là que Moliere illustrant ses écrits
Peut-être de son art eût remporté le prix,
Si moins ami du peuple en ses doctes peintures
Il n'eût point fait souvent grimacer ses figures,
Quitté pour le bouffon l'agréable & le fin,
Et sans bonte à Terence allié Tabarin.**

In truth, Aristophanes and Plautus united buffoonery and delicacy in a greater degree than Moliere; and for this they may be blamed. That which then pleased at Athens, and at Rome, was a transitory beauty, which had not sufficient foundation in truth, and therefore the taste changed. But, if we condemn those ages for this, what age shall we spare? Let us refer every thing to permanent and universal taste, and we shall find in Aristophanes at least as much to commend as censure.

Tragedy
more uniform
than comedy.

XII. But before we go on to his works, it may be allowed to make some reflections upon tragedy and comedy. Tragedy, though different according to the difference of times and writers, is uniform in its nature, being founded upon the passions which never change. With comedy it is otherwise. Whatever difference there is

* Boileau Art. Poet. chant. 3.

between Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, between Corneille and Racine, between the French and the Greeks, it will not be found sufficient to constitute more than one species of tragedy. The works of those great masters are, in some respects, like the sea-nymphs, of whom Ovid says, "That their faces were not the same, yet so much alike that they might be known to be sisters."

*Facies non omnibus una,
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum.*

The reason is, that the same passions give action and animation to them all. With respect to the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus, Menander and Terence, Moliere and his imitators, if we compare them one with another, we shall find something of a family likeness, but much less strongly marked, on account of the different appearance which ridicule and pleasantry take from the different manners of every age. They will not pass for sisters, but for very distant relations. The muse of Aristophanes and Plautus, to speak of her with justice, is a bacchanal at least, whose malignant tongue is dipped in gall, or in poison dangerous as that of the aspic or viper; but whose bursts of malice and sallies of wit often give a blow where it is not expected. The muse of Terence, and consequently of Menander, is an artless and unpainted beauty, of easy gaiety, whose features are rather delicate than striking, rather soft than strong, rather plain and modest than great and haughty, but always perfectly natural.

*Ce n'est pas un portrait, une image semblable :
C'est un fils, un amant, un pere véritable.*

The muse of Moliere is not always plainly dressed, but takes airs of quality, and rises above her original condition, so as to attire herself gracefully in magnificent apparel. In her manners she mingles elegance with foolery, force with delicacy, and grandeur or even haughtiness with plainness and modesty. If sometimes, to please the people, she gives a loose to farce, it is only the gay folly of a moment, from which she immediately returns, and which lasts no longer than a slight intoxication. The first might be painted encircled with little satyrs, some grossly foolish, the others delicate, but all extremely licentious and malignant; monkeys always ready to laugh in your face, and to point out to indisci-

minate

minate ridicule, the good and the bad. The second may be shewn encircled with geniuses full of softness and of candor, taught to please by nature alone, and whose honeyed dialect is so much the more insinuating, as there is no temptation to distrust it. The last must be accompanied with the delicate laughter of the court, and that of the city somewhat more coarse, and neither the one nor the other can be separated from her. The muse of Aristophanes and of Plautus can never be denied the honour of sprightliness, animation, and invention; nor that of Menander and Terence the praise of nature and of delicacy; to that of Moliere must be allowed the happy secret of uniting all the piquancy of the former, with a peculiar art which they did not know. Of these three sorts of merit, let us shew to each the justice that is due, let us in each separate the pure and the true from the false gold, without approving or condemning either the one or the other in the gross. If we must pronounce in general upon the taste of their writings, we must indisputably allow, that Menander, Terence, and Moliere will give most pleasure to a decent audience, and consequently that they approach nearer to the true beauty, and have less mixture of beauties purely relative, than Plautus and Aristophanes.

If we distinguish comedy by its subjects, we shall find three sorts among the Greeks, and as many among the Latins, all differently dressed: if we distinguish it by ages and authors, we shall again find three sorts; and we shall find three sorts a third time if we regard more closely the subject. As the ultimate and general rules of all these sorts of comedy are the same, it will, perhaps, be agreeable to our purpose to sketch them out before we give a full display of the last class. I can do nothing better on this occasion than transcribe the twenty-fifth reflection of Rapin upon poetry in particular.

General rules
of comedy.

XIII. "Comedy, says he*, is a representation of common life:
"its end is to shew the faults of particular characters on the stage,
"to correct the disorder of the people by the fear of ridicule.
"Thus ridicule is the essential part of a comedy. Ridicule may
"be in words, or in things; it may be decent, or grotesque. To
"find what is ridiculous in every thing, is the gift merely of nature;
"for all the actions of life have their bright and their

* Reflexions sur la Poët. p. 154. Paris, 1684.

“ dark sides; something serious, and something merry. But Aristotle,
“ who has given rules for drawing tears, has given none for raising
“ laughter; for this is merely the work of nature, and must proceed
“ from genius, with very little help from art or matter. The Spaniards
“ have a turn to find the ridicule in things much more than we:
“ and the Italians, who are natural comedians, have a better turn
“ for expressing it; their language is more proper for it than ours,
“ by an air of drollery which it can put on, and of which ours
“ may become capable when it shall be brought nearer to per-
“ fection. In short, that agreeable turn, that gaiety which yet
“ maintains the delicacy of its character without falling into dul-
“ ness or into buffoonry, that elegant raillery which is the flower
“ of fine wit, is the qualification which comedy requires. We
“ must, however, remember that the true artificial ridicule, which
“ is required on the theatre, must be only a transcript of the ri-
“ dicule which nature affords. Comedy is naturally written,
“ when, being on the theatre, a man can fancy himself in a pri-
“ vate family, or a particular part of the town, and meets with
“ nothing but what he really meets with in the world; for it is
“ no real comedy in which a man does not see his own picture,
“ and find his own manners and those of the people among
“ whom he lives. Menander succeeded only by this art among
“ the Greeks: and the Romans, when they sat at Terence’s co-
“ medies, imagined themselves in a private party; for they found
“ nothing there which they had not been used to find in com-
“ mon company. The great art of comedy is to adhere to na-
“ ture without deviation; to have general sentiments and expres-
“ sions which all the world can understand: for the writer must
“ keep it always in his mind, that the coarsest touches after na-
“ ture will please more than the most delicate with which nature
“ is inconsistent. However, low and mean words should never
“ be allowed upon the stage, if they are not supported with some
“ kind of wit. Proverbs and vulgar smartnesses can never be suf-
“ fered, unless they have something in them of nature and plea-
“ santry. This is the universal principle of comedy; whatever
“ is represented in this manner must please, and nothing can ever
“ please without it. It is by application to the study of nature
“ alone that we arrive at probability, which is the only infallible
“ guide to theatrical success: without this probability every
“ thing is defective, and that which has it, is beautiful: he that
“ follows this, can never go wrong; and the most common faults
“ of

“ of comedy proceed from the neglect of propriety, and the pre-
 “ cipitation of incidents. Care must likewise be taken that the
 “ hints, made use of to introduce the incidents, are not too strong,
 “ that the spectator may enjoy the pleasure of finding out their
 “ meaning : but commonly the weak place in our comedy is the
 “ untying of the plot in which we almost always fail, on account
 “ of the difficulty which there is in disintangling of what has
 “ been perplexed. To perplex an intrigue is easy, the imagina-
 “ tion does it by itself ; but it must be disintangled merely by
 “ the judgment, and is, therefore, seldom done happily : and he
 “ that reflects a very little, will find that most comedies are faulty
 “ by an unnatural catastrophe. It remains to be examined whe-
 “ ther comedy will allow pictures larger than the life, that this
 “ strength of the strokes may make a deeper impression upon the
 “ mind of the spectators ; that is, if a poet may make a covetous
 “ man more covetous, and a peevish man more impertinent and
 “ more troublesome than he really is. To which I answer, that
 “ this was the practice of Plautus, whose aim was to please the
 “ people ; but that Terence, who wrote for gentlemen, confined
 “ himself within the compass of nature, and represented vice
 “ without addition or aggravation. However, these extravagant
 “ characters, such as the *Citizen turned Gentleman*, and the *Hy-*
 “ *pochondriac Patient* of Moliere, have lately succeeded at court,
 “ where delicacy is carried so far ; but every thing, even to pro-
 “ vincial interludes, is well received if it has but merriment, for
 “ we had rather laugh than admire. These are the most im-
 “ portant rules of comedy.”

Three sorts
of-comedy.

XIV. These rules, indeed, are common to the three kinds which
 I have in my mind ; but it is necessary to distinguish each from
 the rest, which may be done by diversity of matter, which always
 makes some diversity of management. The old and middle co-
 medy simply represented real adventures : in the same way some
 passages of history and of fable might form a class of comedies,
 which should resemble it without having its faults ; such is the *Am-*
phitryon. How many moral tales, how many adventures ancient
 and modern, how many little fables of Esop, of Phædrus, of Fon-
 taine, or some other ancient poet, would make pretty exhibitions,
 if they were all made use of as materials by skillful hands ? And
 have we not seen some like *Timon the Man Hater*, that have been
 successful in this way ? This sort chiefly regards the Italians. The
 ancient exhibition called a satyre, because the satyrs played their
 part

part in it, of which we have no other instance than the *Cyclops* of Euripides, has, without doubt, given occasion to the pastoral comedies, for which we are chiefly indebted to Italy, and which are there more cultivated than in France. It is, however, a kind of exhibition that would have its charms, if it was touched with elegance and without meanness; it is the pastoral put into action. To conclude, the new comedy, invented by Menander, has produced the comedy properly so called in our times. This is that which has for its subject general pictures of common life, and feigned names and adventures, whether of the court or of the city. This third kind is incontestably the most noble, and has received the strongest sanction from custom. It is likewise the most difficult to perform, because it is merely the work of invention, in which the poet has no help from real passages, or persons, which the tragic poet always makes use of. Who knows but by deep thinking, another kind of comedy may be invented wholly different from the three which I have mentioned; such is the fruitfulness of comedy: but its course is already too wide for the discovery of new fields to be wished, and on ground where we are already so apt to stumble, nothing is so dangerous as novelty imperfectly understood. This is the rock on which men have often split in every kind of pursuit, to go no further, in that of grammar and language: it is better to endeavour after novelty in the manner of expressing common things than to hunt for ideas out of the way, in which many a man loses himself. The ill success of that odd composition *Tragic Comedy*, a monster wholly unknown to antiquity, sufficiently shews the danger of novelty in attempts like these.

XV. To finish the parallel of the two dramas, a question may be revived equally common and important, which has been oftener proposed than well decided: it is, whether comedy or tragedy be most easy or difficult to be well executed. I shall not have the temerity to determine positively a question which so many great geniuses have been afraid to decide: but if it be allowed to every literary man to give his reasons for and against a mere work of genius, considered without respect to its good or bad tendency, I shall in a few words give my opinion, drawn from the nature of the two works, and the qualifications they demand. Horace* proposes a question nearly of the same kind: "It has been en-

Whether tragedy or comedy be the harder to write.

* Poet. v. 407.

“ quired, whether a good poem be the work of art or nature :
 “ for my part, I do not see much to be done by art without ge-
 “ nius, nor by genius without knowlege. The one is necessary to
 “ the other, and the success depends upon their co-operation.” If
 we should endeavour to accommodate matters in imitation of this
 decision of Horace, it were easy to say at once, that supposing two
 geniuses equal, one tragic and the other comic, supposing the art
 likewise equal in each, one would be as easy or difficult as the
 other ; but this, though satisfactory in the simple question put by
 Horace, will not be sufficient here. Nobody can doubt but genius
 and industry contribute their part to every thing valuable, and par-
 ticularly to good poetry. But, if genius and study were to be
 weighed one against the other, in order to discover which must
 contribute most to a good work, the question would become more
 curious, and, perhaps, very difficult of solution. Indeed, though
 nature must have a great part of the expence of poetry, yet no
 poetry lasts long that is not very correct : the balance, therefore,
 seems to incline in favour of correction. For is it not known,
 that Virgil with less genius than Ovid, is yet valued more by men
 of exquisite judgment ; or, without going so far, Boileau, the Ho-
 race of our time, who composed with so much labour, and asked
 Moliere where he found his rhyme so easily, has said : “ *If I write*
 “ *four words, I shall blot out three ;*” has not Boileau, by his po-
 lished lines, retouched and retouched a thousand times, gained
 the preference above the works of the same Moliere, which are
 so natural, and produced by so fruitful a genius ! Horace was of
 that opinion, for when he is teaching the writers of his age the
 art of poetry, he tells them in plain terms, that Rome would excel
 in writing as in arms, if the poets were not afraid of the labour,
 patience, and time required to polish their pieces. He thought
 every poem was bad that had not been brought ten times back to
 the anvil, and required that a work should be kept nine years, as
 a child is nine months in the womb of its mother, to restrain
 that natural impatience which combine with sloth and self-love to
 disguise faults ; so certain is it that correction is the touch-stone of
 writing.

The question proposed comes back to the comparison which I
 have been making between genius and correction, since we are
 now engaged in enquiring whether there is more or less difficulty
 in writing tragedy or comedy : for as we must compare nature
 and study one with another, since they must both concur more or
 less

less to make a poet, so if we will compare the labours of two different minds in different kinds of writing, we must, with regard to the authors, compare the force of genius, and with respect to the composition, the difficulties of the task.

The genius of the tragic and comic writer will be easily allowed to be remote from each other. Every performance, be what it will, requires a turn of mind which a man cannot confer upon himself: it is purely the gift of nature, which determines those who have it, to pursue, almost in spite of themselves, the taste which predominates in their minds. Pascal found in his childhood, that he was a mathematician, and Vandyke, that he was born a painter. Sometimes this internal direction of the mind does not make such evident discoveries of itself; but it is rare to find Corneilles who have lived long without knowing that they were poets. Corneille having once got some notion of his powers, tried a long time on all sides to know what particular direction he should take. He had first made an attempt in comedy, in an age when it was yet so gross in France that it could give no pleasure to polite persons. *Melite* was so well received when he dressed her out, that she gave rise to a new species of comedy and comedians. This success, which encouraged Corneille to pursue that sort of comedy of which he was the first inventor, left him no reason to imagine, that he was one day to produce those master-pieces of tragedy, which his muse displayed afterwards with so much splendor; and yet less did he imagine, that his comic pieces, which for want of any that were preferable, were then very much in fashion, would be eclipsed by another genius * formed upon the Greeks and Romans, and who would add to their excellencies improvements of his own, and that this modish comedy, to which Corneille, as to his idol, dedicated his labours, would quickly be forgot. He wrote first *Medea*, and afterwards the *Cid*, and, by that prodigious flight of his genius, he discovered, though late, that nature had formed him to run in no other course but that of Sophocles. Happy genius that, without rule or imitation, could at once take so high a flight! Having once, as I may say, made himself an eagle, he never afterwards quitted the path, which he had worked out for himself, over the heads of the writers of his time: yet he retained some traces of the false taste which infected the whole nation; but even in this, he deserves our admiration, since

* Moliere.

in time he changed it completely by the reflections he made, and those he occasioned. In short, Corneille was born for tragedy, as Moliere for comedy. Moliere, indeed, knew his own genius sooner, and was not less happy in procuring applause, though it often happened to him as to Corneille,

*L'Ignorance & l'Erreur à ses naissantes pièces
En habit de Marquis, en robes de Comtesses,
Vinssent pour diffamer son chef-d'œuvre nouveau,
Et secouer la tête à l'endroit le plus beau.*

But, without taking any farther notice of the time at which either came to the knowledge of his own genius; let us suppose that the powers of tragedy and comedy were as equally shared between Moliere and Corneille, as they are different in their own nature, and then nothing will remain than to compare the several difficulties of each composition, and to rate those difficulties together which are common to both.

It appears, first, that the tragic poet has in his subject an advantage over the comic, for he takes it from history, and his rival, at least in the more elevated and splendid comedy, is obliged to form it by his own invention. Now, it is not so easy as it might seem to find comic subjects capable of a new and pleasing form; but history is a source, if not inexhaustible, yet certainly so copious as never to leave the genius a-ground. It is true, that invention seems to have a wider field than history: real facts are limited in their number, but the facts which may be feigned have no end; but though, in this respect, invention may be allowed to have the advantage, is the difficulty of inventing to be accounted as nothing. To make a tragedy, is to get materials together, and to make use of them like a skilful architect; but to make a comedy, is to build like Esop in the air. It is in vain to boast that the compass of invention is as wide as the extent of desire: every thing is limited, and the mind of man like every thing else. Besides, invention must be in conformity to nature; but distinct and remarkable characters are very rare in nature herself. Moliere has got hold on the principal touches of ridicule. If any man should bring characters less strong, he will be in danger of dulness. Where comedy is to be kept up by subordinate personages, it is in great danger. All the force of a picture must arise from the principal persons, and not from the multitude clustered

clustered up together. In the same manner, a comedy, to be good, must be supported by a single striking character, and not by under-parts.

But, on the contrary, tragic characters are without number, though of them the general out-lines are limited; but dissimulation, jealousy, policy, ambition, desire of dominion, and other interests and passions, are various without end, and take a thousand different forms in different situations of history; so that as long as there is tragedy, there may be always novelty. Thus the jealous and dissembling Mithridates, so happily painted by Racine, will not stand in the way of a poet who shall attempt a jealous and dissembling Tiberius. The stormy violence of an Achilles will always leave room for the stormy violence of Alexander.

But the case is very different with avarice, trifling vanity, hypocrisy, and other vices, considered as ridiculous. It would be safer to double and treble all the tragedies of our greatest poets, and use all their subjects over and over, as has been done with *Oedipus* and *Sophonisba*, than to bring again upon the stage in five acts a *Miser*, a *Citizen turned Gentleman*, a *Tartuffe*, and other subjects sufficiently known. Not that these popular vices are less capable of diversification, or are less varied by different circumstances, than the vices and passions of heroes; but that if they were to be brought over again in comedies, they would be less distinct, less exact, less forcible, and, consequently, less applauded. Pleasantry and ridicule must be more strongly marked than heroism and pathos, which support themselves by their own force. Besides, though these two things of so different natures could support themselves equally in equal variety, which is very far from being the case; yet comedy, as it now stands, consists not in incidents, but in characters. Now it is by incidents only that characters are diversified; as well upon the stage of comedy, as upon the stage of life. Comedy, as Moliere has left it, resembles the pictures of manners drawn by the celebrated La Bruyere. Would any man after him venture to draw them over again, he would expose himself to the fate of those who have ventured to continue them. For instance, what could we add to his character of the *Absent Man*? Shall we put him in other circumstances? the principal strokes of absence of mind will always be the same; and there are only those striking touches which are fit for a comedy, of which the end is painting after nature, but with strength and sprightliness like the
the

the designs of Callot. If comedy were among us what it is in Spain, a kind of romance, consisting of many circumstances and intrigues, perplexed and disentangled, so as to surprise; if it was nearly the same with that which Corneille practised in his time; if, like that of Terence, it went no farther than to draw the common portraits of simple nature, and shew us fathers, sons, and rivals; notwithstanding the uniformity, which would always prevail as in the plays of Terence, and probably in those of Menander, whom he imitated in his four first pieces, there would always be a resource found either in variety of incidents, like those of the Spaniards, or in the repetition of the same characters in the way of Terence: but the case is now very different, the public calls for new characters and nothing else. Multiplicity of accidents, and the laborious contrivance of an intrigue, are not now allowed to shelter a weak genius that would find great conveniences in that way of writing. Nor does it suit the taste of comedy, which requires an air less constrained, and such freedom and ease of manners as admits nothing of the romantic. She leaves all the pomp of sudden events to the novels, or little romances, which were the diversion of the last age. She allows nothing but a succession of characters resembling nature, and falling in without any apparent contrivance. Racine has likewise taught us to give to tragedy the same simplicity of air and action; he has endeavoured to disentangle it from that great number of incidents, which made it rather a study than diversion to the audience, and which shew the poet not so much to abound in invention, as to be deficient in taste. But, notwithstanding all that he has done, or that we can do, to make it simple, it will always have the advantage over comedy in the number of its subjects, because it admits more variety of situations and events, which give variety and novelty to the characters. A miser, copied after nature, will always be the miser of Plautus or Moliere; but a Nero, or a prince like Nero, will not always be the hero of Racine. Comedy admits of so little intrigue, that the miser cannot be shewn in any such position as will make his picture new; but the great events of tragedy may put Nero in such circumstances as to make him wholly another character.

But, in the second place, over and above the subjects, may we not say something concerning the final purpose of comedy and tragedy? The purpose of the one is to divert, and the other to move; and

and of these two, which is the easier? To go to the bottom of those purposes; to move is to strike those strings of the heart which is most natural, terror and pity: to divert is to make one laugh, a thing which indeed is natural enough, but more delicate. The gentleman and the rustic have both sensibility and tenderness of heart, perhaps in greater or less degree; but as they are men alike, the heart is moved by the same touches. They both love likewise to send their thoughts abroad, and to expand themselves in merriment; but the springs which must be touched for this purpose, are not the same in the gentleman and the rustic. The passions depend on nature, and merriment upon education. The clown will laugh at a waggery, and the gentleman only at a stroke of delicate conceit. The spectators of a tragedy, if they have but a little knowledge, are almost all on a level; but with respect to comedy, we have three classes, if not more, the people, the learned, and the court. If there are certain cases in which all may be comprehended in the term of people, this is not one of those cases. Whatever father Rapin may say about it, we are more willing even to admire than to laugh. Every man that has any power of distinction, laughs as rarely as the philosopher admires; for we are not to reckon those fits of laughter which are not incited by nature, and which are given merely to complaisance, to respect, flattery, and good humour; such as break out at sayings which pretend to smartness in assemblies. The laughter of the theatre is of another stamp. Every reader and spectator judges of wit by his own standard, and measures it by his capacity, or by his condition: the different capacities and conditions of men make them diverted on very different occasions. If, therefore, we consider the end of the tragic and comic poet, the comedian must be involved in much more difficulties, without taking in the obstructions to be encountered equally by both, in an art which consists in raising the passions or the mirth of a great multitude. The tragedian has little to do but to reflect upon his own thoughts, and draw from his heart those sentiments which will certainly make their way to the hearts of others, if he found them in his own. The other must take many forms, and change himself almost into as many persons, as he undertakes to satisfy and divert.

It may be said, that, if genius be supposed equal, and success supposed to depend upon genius, the business will be equally easy and difficult to one author and to the other. This objection is of

no weight; for the same question still recurs, which is, whether of these two kinds of genius is more valuable or more rare. If we proceed by example, and not by reasoning, we shall decide I think in favour of comedy.

It may be said, that, if merely art be considered, it will require deeper thoughts to form a plan just and simple; to produce happy surprises without apparent contrivance; to carry a passion skilfully through its gradations to its height; to arrive happily to the end by always moving from it, as Ithaca seemed to fly Ulysses; to unite the acts and scenes; and to raise by insensible degrees a striking edifice, of which the least merit shall be exactness of proportion. It may be added, that in comedy this art is infinitely less, for there the characters come upon the stage with very little artifice or plot; the whole scheme is so connected that we see it at once, and the plan and disposition of the parts make a small part of its excellence, in comparison of a gloss of pleasantry diffused over each scene, which is more the happily effect of a lucky moment, than of long consideration.

These objections, and many others, which so fruitful a subject might easily suggest, it is not difficult to refute: and if we were to judge by the impression made on the mind by tragedies and comedies of equal excellence, perhaps, when we examine those impressions, it will be found that a fally of pleasantry, which diverts all the world, required more thought, than a passage which gave the highest pleasure in tragedy; and to this determination we shall be more inclined when a closer examination shall shew us, that a happy vein of tragedy is opened and effused at less expence, than a well-placed witticism in comedy has required merely to assign its place.

It would be too much to dwell long upon such a digression; and as I have no business to decide the question, I leave both that and my arguments to the taste of each particular reader, who will find what is to be said for or against it. My purpose was only to say of comedy, considered as a work of genius, all that a man of letters can be supposed to deliver without departing from his character, and without palliating in any degree the corrupt use which has been almost always made of an exhibition which in its nature might be innocent; but has been vicious from the time that it has been infected with the wickedness of men. It is not for public exhibitions that I am now writing, but for literary inquiries.

quiries. The stage is too much frequented, and books too much neglected. Yet it is to the literature of Greece and Rome that we are indebted for that valuable taste, which will be insensibly lost by the affected negligence which now prevails of having recourse to originals. If reason has been a considerable gainer, it must be confessed that taste has been somewhat a loser.

To return to Aristophanes : so many great men of antiquity, through a long succession of ages, down to our times, have set a value upon his works, that we cannot naturally suppose them contemptible, notwithstanding the essential faults with which he may be justly reproached. It is sufficient to say, that he was esteemed by Plato and Cicero ; and to conclude by that which does him most honour, but still falls short of justification, the strong and sprightly eloquence of St. Chrysostom drew its support from the masculine and vigorous Atticism of this sarcastic comedian, to whom the father paid the same regard as Alexander to Homer, that of putting his works under his pillow, that he might read them at night before he slept, and in the morning as soon as he awaked. Let us now revise the comedies of Aristophanes.

P R E L I M I N A R Y O B S E R V A T I O N S.

The seasons when tragedies and comedies were represented.

I. **C**OMEDIES were represented, by public authority, three or four times a year; towards spring, at the Dionysian ¹ festival in the city; at the Panathenea, or festival of Minerva, every five years; and at that of the Lenæan ² Bacchus, about the end of autumn, in the country. Besides these festivals, it is alleged, that there was another particularly dedicated to Bacchus: this, which had the name of Anthristeria, was subdivided into three, the feast of the Tuns, that of the Goblet ³, and that of the Pots. The excommunication of Orestes, say antiquaries, gave rise to the feast of the Goblet, at which theatrical performances were always exhibited. Upon these occasions, the tragic and comic poets contended for the prize: all the former offered four dramas a-piece, except Sophocles, who, disliking so laborious an exercise, never would present more than one at a time, in this dramatic competition.

The judges of theatrical performances.

II. The state appointed commissioners, to ascertain the merit of each performance, before they were represented at the several festivals. For this purpose, the judges had each piece acted before them, when the people had leave to be present ⁴; but then the decorations were neither many, nor magnificent. After this, they passed sentence; and that piece which obtained the suffrage of the majority, was declared victorious, crowned as such, and performed with all imaginable pomp, at the expence of the republic. Those also were acted, to which the commissioners assigned the second and even the third rank of merit; this was equitable; the best had not always the preference given them, for in what country have not parties, ignorance, inconstancy, caprice, and prejudice, exerted their baleful effects?

¹ Of Bacchus, who was also called Dionysius.

² So named from the Greek word *λῆνος*, a wine-press.

³ Euripides mentions this feast in his *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

⁴ This appears from a passage in the *Birds* of Aristophanes.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS. 163

III. It is not known, that Aristophanes ever appeared on the stage in any of his comedies, but once, when he personated Cleon in the *Knights*; and to this he was obliged to submit, as he could find no actor bold enough to hazard the resentment of that powerful Athenian: at least it is certain, that this was the first time of his putting on the sock in public. Callistratus and Philonides were those whom he usually employed. Callistratus brought those comedies on the stage, which neither attacked the state, nor any of its members, such as the *Plutus*: while the other played only in those pieces, which represented his spectators as they were, and which lashed the republic, without exhibiting particulars. Such is the account given us of these matters by the anonymous writer of the life of Aristophanes.

The principal actors of Aristophanes.

IV. Although neither those Grecian comedies, nor tragedies, which have come down to us, are divided into five acts, it is not difficult to discover, that the poets solicitously regarded that partition, which the very nature of the drama suggested. Accordingly the commentators have marked the acts in most of these pieces, as I have done by such of the comic poets as had not been divided.

The division of dramatic performances into acts.

V. The first comedy of Aristophanes, but which is now lost, was called *Ætoliens*¹. To this piece, when acted, he did not prefix his name, being then disqualified by law, which forbade any poet, not thirty, others say forty² years of age, to write for the stage. It was, however, represented by Callistratus, under the archonship of Diotimus, the first year of the eighty-eighth Olympiad³, and had the second rank⁴ assigned it. This æra partly determines the dates of his other performances. But independent of this, most of those comedies, which either essentially regard the Athenian state, and its illustrious citizens, or which allude to the Peloponnesian war, for during its continuance were presented most of those which now remain, have their dates fixed by the words of Aristophanes himself, by the ancient Greek prefaces to his works, by the scholiasts, or lastly by conclusions to be deduced from an assemblage of all these particulars. Proofs of

The order of time, in which the comedies of Aristophanes were represented.

¹ A people of Attica.

³ An anonymous writer on the Olympiad.

² See the scene of the Chorus to the spectators in the *Clouds*, and the scholiast thereon.

⁴ See the scholiast.

this will be given in their proper place; and as the comic writings of Aristophanes cannot be properly understood without this, I have thought it necessary to subjoin the following arrangement¹:

1. The Acharnians.	} Represented the year of the Pelopone- sian war	6
2. The Knights.		7
3. The Clouds.		9
4. The Wasps.		9
5. The Peace.		13
6. The Birds.		18
7. The Festival of Ceres.		21
8. Lyfistrata.		21
9. The Frogs.		26
10. The Female Orators. —	The 4th year of the 69th Olympiad.	
11. Plutus. — — —	The 4th year of the 97th Olympiad.	

In this manner ought the comedies of Aristophanes to be disposed, as the proofs will shew; and for this reason, I prefer it to the following arrangement of them, which his editors have given:

1. Plutus.
2. The Clouds.
3. The Frogs.
4. The Knights.
5. The Acharnians.
6. The Wasps.
7. The Peace.
8. The Birds.
9. The Female Orators.
10. The Festival of Ceres.
11. Lyfistrata.

Little literary attention has been employed to determine the dates of the several tragedies of Eschylus, of Sophocles, and Euripides: neither indeed was it necessary, for these pieces were not only altogether independant of the times in which they were acted, but their subjects were anterior to them, and known to be fabulous. But it is quite otherwise with Aristophanes, for so in-

¹ After Petit, Paulmier, Spanheim, Kuster, and Aristophanes himself.

timately are his comedies connected with the time in which he composed them, that their most pleasing and delicate strokes wholly escape the reader, unless the facts which gave rise to them, and, of course, the true origin of each piece, are ascertained. And this labour is the more indispensably required, as the scholiasts, from whom, in other points, we have received so many important illustrations, have sometimes fallen into gross blunders, often adopted by succeeding scholars, for want of this chronological precision.

VI. But as the ascertainment of their dates, without subjoining the cotemporary events, would be productive of little or no advantage, I have thought it incumbent upon me, to present the reader with a sketch of the most remarkable incidents of the famous Peloponnesian war. A complete history of Greece would be the best commentary on the works of Aristophanes. To supply this want, I have extracted the fasti of that war from the Chronology of P. Petau; and have sometimes corroborated the authority of Thucydides, who wrote the history of part of it, by that of the comic poet. A cursory perusal of this part of my book will, at first, be sufficient, but in reading the comedies themselves, and especially those intitled the *Acharnians*, the *Knights*, and the *Peace*, frequent recourse should be had to it. Without this, these three pieces are not to be understood; and though, in the account I have given of them, the facts to which they allude are brought together, and even opened up, yet this revival of the fasti will more fully explain them. Perhaps some difficulties may be started with regard to the difference, which may be observed, between what P. Petau has published, and that which I shall give of the several archonships during that period: but this may be easily adjusted by attentively considering the beginning and expiration of this supreme office. This consideration will also reconcile my fasti to what the scholiasts of Aristophanes have left us on this subject.

Annals of the
facts to which
Aristophanes
alludes.

So sensible was Thucydides of the necessity of this, that, in the fifth book of his History, he advertises the reader, "To keep
" to his method of computation by the summers and winters of
" the war, without in the least regarding the succession he men-
" tions of the Athenian archons, or of the magistrates and gene-
" rals of any other country; as this would inevitably embarrass
" him,

"him, on account of the different times on which these several offices began and expired."

VII. The reader is intreated not superciliously to reject these researches, as if their object was merely to ascertain the catch-word, when he was to smile. Unlucky, to be sure, it is for the comedies of Aristophanes, that so much preparation is necessary before we can be entertained with their wit; especially as all satire loses part of its merit, when its meaning must be guessed at. But such is the fate of temporary humour, and local pleasantry. Their edge is set by almost imperceptible means, and blunted when these disappear, in much less time than an age. Boileau did, therefore, wisely in procuring himself a commentator while yet alive: Moliere stands almost in need of one, as much as the satyrist: how then can the comic pieces of Aristophanes be read, far less relished, without such a literary assistance?

A N N A L S

OF THE

PELOPONESIAN WAR,

By way of COMMENTARY on the COMEDIES
of ARISTOPHANES.

THE beginning of the Peloponesian war under the archon-ship of Pythodorus, in the Spring. Thucyd. lib. 2. The true cause was the jealousy of the Lacedæmonians, with respect to Athens, which they thought was become too powerful and insolent; but this they cloaked under the pretexts of various hostilities, and especially of that decree obtained by Pericles against the people of Megara¹; which he dreading to give an account of, promoted the beginning of the war with all the arts of secret and consummate policy. The surprise of Platea² was the first action in this war, at which place the Thebans were all cut to pieces. Some Months after the Lacedæmonians revenged this affront by ravaging the territories of Attica, and encamped at Acharnium³, fourteen years after the irruption of Plistoanax. Thucyd. lib. 2. The Athenians drive the people of Egina⁴ from that island, and ruin the coast of Lacedæmon with a fleet of one hundred vessels. They also bring over to their party Sitalces, king of Thrace, and Perdiccas, king of Macedon. See the *Acharnians*, the *Knights*, and the *Peace*. An eclipse of the sun, Wednesday the 3d of August, 17 hours 43 minutes after mid-day.

The Athenians are obliged to raise the siege of Methona⁵. Brasidas, a Lacedæmonian chief, becomes famous. A dreadful plague

Before the birth of Christ 431 years. After the building of Rome 323 years: the 2d year of the 87 Olympiad, and first year of the war.

Third year, and 2d of the war. Apollo-dorus being archon.

¹ The capital of a country situated between Athens and Corinth.

² A frontier city of Bæotia.

³ One of the richest countries in Attica.

⁴ An island in the Saronic gulph.

⁵ A city in the Peloponesus at the maritime extremity of Messenia.

occasioned

occasioned by an extraordinary concourse of peasants to Athens, whither they fled on account of a second irruption of the Spartans. Pericles again insults the coasts of Lacedæmon, and incurs the hatred of his countrymen, who condemn him to pay a considerable fine. Thucyd. lib. 2. Diod. lib. 12. See the *Knights*.

Fourth year :
of the war the
3d. Epami-
non being
archon.

Pericles dies two years and a half after the commencement of the war. Agnon, the Athenian general, takes Potidea¹, while Phormion, another Athenian captain, obtains two naval victories over the Lacedæmonians. The inhabitants of the Peloponesus attack Platea in the month of October, and Sitalces is employed against Perdiceas. Thucyd. lib. 2. See the *Acbarrians*.

Olympiad 88.
the 4th of the
war. Dioti-
mus being
archon.

The Lesbians², especially those of Mitylena, abandon the party of Athens, and secretly send deputies to the Peloponesians. Thucyd. lib. 3. Mitylena is taken, and its inhabitants are put to the sword. The siege of Platea continued.

Second year :
and 5th of the
war, under the
archonship of
Euclides.

The Athenians, at the earnest entreaty of the Leontines³, send a fleet to Sicily to defend those people against the Syracusans⁴, which soon produced a reconciliation. The Mitylenians are a second time besieged by Paches, and obliged to surrender; the men are condemned to death, and the women and children to slavery. But these severe resolutions were stopped by a counter-order which was sent from Athens the day after. See the *Acbarrians*. The Lacedæmonians take and destroy Platea. A sedition in Corcyra⁵; the nobles incline to Sparta, the people to Athens, who supports them against the nobility. Diod. lib. 12. Thucyd. lib. 3.

Third year :
and 6th of the
war, under the
archonship of
Scytodorus.

The plague breaks out again at Athens. Delos⁶ is purified by removing the dead. Trachinum⁷ assumes the name of Heraclea, and becomes a colony of Lacedæmon. Laches in Sicily brings over the Messinians to the side of Athens, which sends thirty ships to the Peloponesus, under the conduct of Demosthenes, Alcisthenes, and of Procles, and detach Nicias with a squadron of fifty to the isle of Melos⁸. Nicias beats the Bœotians at Tanagra⁹. De-

¹ A city of Macedon, and colony of the Corinthians, situated at the isthmus of Palæna.

² Lesbos, an island in the Ægean sea, of which Mitylena was the capital.

³ Leontium, an ancient city of Sicily, formerly inhabited by the Lestrigons.

⁴ Syracusa the most considerable city in Sicily.

⁵ An island in the Ionian sea, not far from Epirus.

⁶ An island in the Ægean sea, famous for the birth of Diana and Apollo.

⁷ A city, and country so called, situated on the Malcan bay.

⁸ An island near Crete.

⁹ A city of Bœotia, situated on the river A'opus.

mosthenes'

mosthenes infests the Leucadians* with the troops of the Acharnani*, but is defeated by the Ætolians. The Athenians make a successful inroad into Magna Græcia, plunder the Locrian* territories, and take the city of Peripopolion. Demosthenes has his revenge on the Ætolians, whom he conquers, though assisted in the action by the Spartans. Diod. lib. 12.

Demosthenes fortifies Pylos, about twenty leagues distant from Lacedæmon. The Lacedæmonians throw some troops into the small isle of Sphaacteria, opposite the port of Pylos*, who are surrounded, and cut off from every resource. The Lacedæmonians begin a treaty, which the Athenians unhappily break off by the impolitic advice of Cleon, who being appointed general, contrary to his inclination, takes Sphaacteria, with the assistance of Demosthenes. Thucyd. lib. 3. Diod. lib. 12. See the *Knights*, which comedy turns chiefly upon this affair. Artaxerxes Longomannus dies in the fortieth year of his reign, and is succeeded by Xerxes for two months, and by Sogdianus who reigns seven. The Syracusans and Locrians take Messina.

Fourth year :
and 7th of the
war. Strato-
cles being ar-
chon.

The people of Syracuse, and the other Sicilians conclude a peace with the Athenian generals, who, at their return, are either fined, or banished. Brasidas, the Spartan chief, saved Megara from being surprised by the Athenians, who send Lamachus to Pontus*, and Demosthenes to Naupactum*. Brasidas, on his part, waits on Perdiccas, with whom he enters into treaty, brings over several cities to the side of Lacedæmon, and takes Amphipolis*. Thucyd. lib. 4. Diod. lib. 14. See the *Acarnians* and the *Peace*.

a 89th Olym-
piad, and 8th
of the war.
Isarchus ar-
chon.

Beginning of the reign of Darius Nothus, the ninth king of Persia, which lasts nineteen years. This æra is the date of the first *Clouds* of Aristophanes. The second *Clouds* was acted the following year. Scholiast of Aristophanes. Socrates was not put to

* The Leucadians inhabited an island in the Ionian sea. This island formerly made a part of Acharnania, as Ovid mentions in *Metam.* lib. xv. v. 289.

* Acharnania was a country bordering on Epirus, and separated from Ætolia by the river Achelous.

* The country of the Locrians was bounded by the Dorian territories, by Pho-

cis, and the Ægean sea. They had a colony called after them, in Calabria.

* A city and haven of the Peloponnesus.

* A country of considerable extent in Asia Minor.

* A city of Ætolia, on the gulph of Corinth, now called Lepante.

* A city of Thrace, so called on account of the river Strymon's almost surrounding it.

death till the first year of the 95th Olympiad, aged seventy, as Diogenes Laertius and Eusebius mention, that is twenty-three years, at least, after the representation of the *Clouds*; therefore, that comic poet was not the immediate cause of his death, as Ælian would insinuate. This point will be further illustrated in its proper place from Mr. Paulmier's Exercitationes. An eclipse of the sun, Wednesday, the 21st of March, 8 hours 29 minutes after midnight. Thucyd. lib. 3.

Second year :
and 9th of the
war. Aminias
archon.

Lamachus, the Athenian admiral, has his fleet destroyed by a storm near the Thracian Heraclea. A cessation of arms for one year between Athens and Lacedæmon; but before this was intimated to Brasidas, he takes Sciona¹, which causes fresh altercation. Menda² revolts to the Lacedæmonians; but is retaken by Nicias. Sciona is besieged, and Perdiccas, disgusted at the Spartans, enters again into a confederacy with the Athenians. The temple of Argos burnt by the carelessness of one of the priests. Thucyd. lib. 3. Diod. lib. 12.

Third year :
and 10th of
the war.
Alcæus archon.

Cleon, in Thrace, takes Torona; but, retiring precipitately from before Amphipolis, is killed in the pursuit, and though Brasidas also fell in the action, the Spartans gain the victory. The death of these two turbulent commanders procures a league for fifty years between Athens and Lacedæmon, which properly terminates the Peloponesian war. Thucyd. lib. 5. Yet is that also which followed, called the war of Peloponesus, because the troubles, which some time after broke the peace, were a natural consequence of this first war. This epocha is remarkable for having produced most of the comic pieces of Aristophanes.

Fourth year :
and 11th of
the war.
Ariston being
archon.

The Grecian cities, suspecting that Athens and Sparta had conspired against the general liberty of the rest of Greece, enter into a confederacy; and to prevent any jealousy among, or danger from one another, they transfer the supreme authority to Argos. The Spartans endeavour to retain their allies by condescension, while the Athenians treat theirs with insolent severity, which again occasions fresh troubles. Thucyd. lib. 5. Diod. lib. 12.

90th Olymp.
and 12th of
the war. Aristophylus or
Astyphilus
being archon.

The Athenians re-establish the Delians, whom they drove from their island, and refusing to deliver up Pylos to the Lacedæmonians, the war breaks out anew. Alcibiades brings over, by stratagem,

¹ One of the five cities of Phlegra, a peninsula between the gulphs of Therma and Torona in Macedon.

² A city of Phlegra.

the Argives to the party of Athens. The Elians¹ are solemnly excluded from the Olympic games, for having committed some acts of hostility during the suspension of arms which always obtained while these games were celebrating.

The Argives declare war against the Spartans, conclude a peace with them, and violate it. The Boeotians seize on Heraclia². Alcibiades enters the Peloponnesus with an armed force. The Argives get possession of Epidaurus³. Thucyd. lib. 5. Diod. lib. 12. See the *Peace*.

The Lacedæmonians obtain a signal victory over the people of Argos and Mantinea⁴; but, toward the end of the fourth year of the 90th Olympiad, conclude a treaty with them. Thucyd. lib. 5. The Athenians grow suspicious of Perdiccas.

The Athenians rashly undertake a war in Sicily from the following motives. The inhabitants of Selinus⁵ having overwhelmed the Ægestans, and those of Syracuse being drove from their homes by the people of Leontum, the unfortunate Ægestans⁶ and Syracusans had recourse to the Athenians, who immediately, being instigated thereto by Alcibiades, undertake their re-establishment, with the design, however, of adding the whole island of Sicily to their own dominions; but the success was so far from answering their fraudulent purposes, that the Athenians never received so terrible a check. Alcibiades, Nicias, and Lamachus were the generals appointed for this expedition, which Aristophanes cannot allude to in the *Peace*, whatever commentators have asserted to the contrary, as it was not undertaken at the time that comedy was brought on the stage. The Athenians subdue the island of Melos, and put to the sword all its inhabitants above the age of puberty. Thucyd. lib. 5. Diod. lib. 12.

A formidable squadron sails from Athens to Sicily. All the figures of Mercury, which stood in the thoroughfares, are found mutilated one morning, which the people regard as an unlucky presage of the Sicilian squadron, and accuse Alcibiades of this piece of impiety, whom they, therefore, command to return from

¹ The inhabitants of Elis in the Peloponnesus.

² Of Trachinium.

³ A city of Peloponnesus, famous for a temple of Æsculapius.

⁴ A city of Arcadia.

⁵ A city in Sicily.

⁶ They inhabited a city in Sicily, supposed to be built by Æneas, and called Ægesta, after the mother of Alcestes.

Sicily, to answer to this accusation : that general returns to Thurium¹, and from thence flies over to the Lacedæmonians, whom he engages to succour Sicily against the arms of his country, which send out Gylippus in his stead. Diod. lib. 13.

Third year :
and 18th of
the war.
Pisander archon.

In Sicily the Athenians block up Syracuse, and lose their general Lamachus ; and in Greece, assisted by the Argives, make a successful inroad into Laconia. The league is broken. The Syracusans fortify themselves, and Nicias, being reduced to great straits, solicits his recall. Thucyd. lib. 7.

Fourth year :
and 19th of
the war.
Cleocritus being archon.

The Spartans take Decelia², a city situated about one hundred and twenty stadia from Athens, which dispatches reinforcements to Sicily, under the command of Eurymedon and Demosthenes. The Syracusans defeated in a naval engagement ; but they soon regain their honour by conquering the Athenians both by sea and land. An eclipse of the moon, Wednesday the 28th of August, near mid-night. Thucyd. lib. 8. This double defeat produced the revolt not only of the isles of Lesbos and Chios, but Eubœa began to waver in its affection to Athens. Tissaphernes and Pharnabazes, the lieutenants of the Persian monarch, confer with the Lacedæmonians, who conclude a treaty with Darius Nothus the great king.

92d Olymp.
and 20th of
the war.
Callius being archon.

The Athenians attack Chios³. The Syracusans send succours to the people of Peloponnesus. Alcibiades negotiates his pardon, and returns home. He proposes to gain over Tissaphernes, and establish an oligarchy, which Pisander accomplishes : accordingly four hundred administrators are appointed supreme in Athens, one hundred years after the abolition of its monarchy. Alcibiades makes his peace, quits Lacedæmon, and comes back to Athens. Charminus, an Athenian admiral, is beat by Antiochus the Lacedæmonian, in a naval engagement off the isle of Simia⁴, and loses six triremes. Aristoph. *Festival of Ceres*. Thucyd. Diod.

Second year :
and 21st of
the war.

The four hundred administrators exercise an unsupportable tyranny. Agis, king of Sparta, alarms Attica. Hyperbolus, whom Aristophanes mentions so often, being banished by Ostracism, an honour he no ways deserved, is killed at Samos⁵ in a sedition.

¹ A city of Calabria, near the mouth of the river Sybaris.

² A city of Attica.

³ A beautiful island in the Ægean sea,

between Samos and Lesbos.

⁴ A small island of the Ægean sea.

⁵ An island in the Icarian sea, opposite to Ephesus.

The conduct of affairs is taken from the four hundred, and conferred upon five thousand. The Athenians are conquered in Eubea, and that island revolts. Mindarus, the Lacedæmonian commander, sends a fleet from Miletum¹ into the Hellespont, by deceiving the Athenians; but is worsted by Thrasybulus and Trasylus in a naval engagement between Sestos² and Abydos, in consequence the Athenians take Cyzicum. Here Thucydides ends his History. Mindarus, being defeated a third time at Cyzicum³, is there killed. Xenophon, lib. 1.

The Ægeans, being oppressed by the Selinuntians, and dreading the resentment of the Syracusans, at that time intimately leagued with the Athenians, call over the Carthaginians, who send to their assistance Hannibal, grand-son of Hamilcar, and son of Gisco, while the Selinuntians beg aid from the people of Syracuse. Diod. lib. 13. The inhabitants of Chalcis in Eubea desert the Athenians, conspire with the Boeotians, and narrowing their arm of the sea, leave the channel so narrow that only one vessel could sail up it at a time. The Lacedæmonians in vain solicit a peace. Diod. lib. 3. Archelaus, the fourteenth king of Macedon, reigns fourteen years.

Hannibal pillages Selinus, and takes Himera⁴ 242 years after their foundation. The Spartans regain Pylos, after it has been fortified, and fifteen years in possession of the Athenians. Theramenes takes Chalcedonium⁵, and Alcibiades Byzantium. Diod. lib. 13.

The Athenians conquer all the cities on the Hellespont, except Abydos, and Alcibiades is received with great pomp on his return to Athens. Soon after he goes on board a fleet, and makes several descents. The Lacedæmonians appoint Lyfander general, and being assisted in Asia by Cyrus, the son of Darius Nothus, gains some advantages over Antiochus, whom Alcibiades had appointed his successor in command. Upon this account, the Athenians accuse Alcibiades, and intrusting his army to the management of ten generals, he flies a second time from Athens. Diod. lib. 13.

Third year:
and 22d of
the war.
Glauippus
archon.

Fourth year:
and 23d of
the war.
Diocles ar-
chon.

93d Olymp.
and 24th of
the war.
Eusemon
archon.

¹ A city on the frontiers of Caria, near the river Meander.

² Two cities on the Hellespont, now called Dardanelles.

³ An island of the Propontus.

⁴ A Greek city in Sicily, famous for the birth of the poet Stesichorus, and for warm

baths, which Minerva was said to have discovered to Hercules. Aristophanes laughs at this report in the *Clouds*.

⁵ An ancient city of Thrace, separated from Byzantium by the Thracian Bosphorus.

2d year of the
93d Olymp.
and 25th of
the war. Anti-
genes archon.

Third year,
and 26th of
the war. Cal-
lias archon.

Fourth year,
and 27th of
the war.
Alexias ar-
chon.

28th year of
the war:
404 years be-
fore the birth
of our Sa-
viour, and
350 after the
building of
Rome.

The Lacedæmonians appoint Callicratidas to succeed Lyfander. Conon, the Athenian, being obliged to retire into Mitylena, is there besieged by Callicratidas. Diod. lib. 13.

The Athenians conquer the Arginusian islands between Mitylena and Methymnus¹, where Callicratidas loses his life. The Athenian commanders are punished for not having taken up the bodies of the shipwrecked, although a storm rendered that impracticable. An eclipse of the moon, Monday, 8 hours 50 minutes after mid-day. The temple of Minerva at Athens burnt, Xenoph. lib. 2. According to Apollodorus the annalist, the two great tragic poets Sophocles and Euripides died this year; other historians, however, assert, that the former, though elder than Euripides, outlived him six years.

Aracus is appointed colleague to Lyfander, with orders to obey Lyfander's directions. The Athenians, disregarding the counsels of Alcibiades, suffer a signal defeat at Ægos Potamos². Lyfander lays siege to Athens, and in six months time reduces it to his obedience, viz. about the first year of the 94th Olympiad, and 28th of April. The Thebans insist upon the demolition of Athens; this the Spartans prevent, but establish thirty tyrants to govern it. Theramenes their chief, though the most moderate of them, is assassinated. An eclipse of the sun on Friday the 3d of September.

By the reduction of Athens a period was put to the Peloponnesian war, after it had lasted twenty-seven years and a half. The fortifications, which Themistocles had erected at the port of Pyreum, were razed. Pausan. in *Attic*. Alcibiades died the same year: Diod. lib. 13.

¹ Two cities at the extremities of Lesbos. The three small Arginusian islands, which Strabo places between Mitylena and Methymnus, are either omitted, or misplaced

in the modern charts. In this sea Conon fought his naval engagement.

² A city in the Thracian Chersonesus.

THE
COMEDIES
OF
ARISTOPHANES.

THE
COMMEDIA



ARISTOPHANES

THE
C O M E D I E S
OF
A R I S T O P H A N E S.

THE
A C H A R N E N S E S.

This Comedy was acted in the sixth year of the Peloponesian war, in the third year of the 88th Olympiad, during the Lenean festivals, under the archon who succeeded Euclides, which was either Euthymenes, according to the Greek preface; or Euthydemus, as asserted by Samuel Petit and Paulmier; or Scitbodus, according to Diodorus. The proof of this date is taken from the ancient Greek subject, and confirmed by the words of Aristophanes himself.

THE subject of this comedy tends directly to the public good, and to the safety of the whole state. The poet's design is to prevail upon the Athenians to make peace with Lacedæmon; but the conduct and turn he employs in treating an affair of state, of this delicate nature, are very enigmatical. There runs through it, in general, a great deal of low humour, which we must pass over slightly, or rather wholly suppress.

The better to understand the plan of this piece, and its most beautiful passages, it will be necessary to take the story higher; that is, to go back to the Peloponesian war. Many causes contributed to kindle and keep alive this war, all of which are related in Thucy-

dides, and part in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*. Pericles, who was one of the wisest men and greatest captains of the Athenians, played a very considerable part in this war, so fatal to all Greece. Whatever were the disputes, whatever the interests, it would have been easy for him to have settled all amicably; but, instead of making the attempt, it is pretended that he blew the breath of discord, and that it was he alone who lighted up this general flame. The fact is as follows, "which Aristophanes (says Plutarch) made "so much noise about, that the people had his verses continually "in their mouths."

There was in Athens a celebrated beauty called Aspasia*, her wit and the charms of her person rendered her the oracle of the Athenians. Persons of the greatest dignity in the commonwealth thought it an honour to visit her, and Socrates himself did not scruple to make his court to her. Aspasia governed the state, without seeming to concern herself in public affairs. Pericles was in love with her, and she fixed him so absolutely in her power, that he repudiated his wife, that he might be at liberty to marry her. This woman entertained several courtesans in her house. Certain young Athenians, heated with wine, took it into their heads to go to Megara, and carry off from thence a courtesan named Simætha. The Megarensians, in revenge, went to Athens and stole away two of Aspasia's courtesans. The rape of these three infamous women proved more fatal to the Greeks than that of Helen to the Trojans: for it cost the former a war of twenty-eight years continuance, the most bloody one they had ever yet sustained; and the confederate Greeks were within a little of utterly destroying Athens, the most glorious of their republics.

Pericles, it was said, engaged so warmly in Aspasia's interests, that he procured a most severe decree against the Megarensians. "Archidamus, king of the Lacedæmonians, endeavoured amicably "to compose these differences, and to pacify the allies; the war "might probably have been prevented, could the Athenians have "been prevailed upon to come to an accommodation with the Megarensians, and to have repealed the decree which they had made "against them. Therefore, as the opposition that was made to "this measure proceeded chiefly from Pericles, who enflamed the "minds of the people, and persisted in his implacable enmity to

* Plutarch, in his *Life of Pericles*.

“ the Megarensians, he was considered as the sole author of the
 “ war. It is said, that ambassadors came upon this occasion to
 “ Athens from Sparta : Pericles alleged a certain law, that forbad
 “ the taking down any table on which a decree of the people
 “ was written ; *Well then*, said Polyarces, one of the ambassadors,
 “ *do not take it down, only turn the other side outward ; there is no*
 “ *law against that*. The pleasantry of this repartee had no effect
 “ upon Pericles, nor in the least abated his animosity against the
 “ people of Megara. It is probable that his hatred to them was
 “ owing to some private and personal cause : but the charge
 “ which he brought against them in public, was, that they had
 “ appropriated to themselves a piece of consecrated land ; and he
 “ procured a decree to be passed, that a herald should be sent to
 “ Megara to expostulate with them, and from thence should go
 “ to Sparta to accuse them there of this sacrilegious action. This
 “ decree of Pericles contained nothing more than a mild and
 “ equitable remonstrance. But the herald, Anthemocritus, dying
 “ by the way, and the Megarensians being suspected as the authors
 “ of his death, Charinus proposed a decree, that there should be
 “ an eternal and irreconcilable hatred between the two states ;
 “ that if any Megarensian entered the territory of the Athenians, he
 “ should be put to death ; that the Athenian generals, when they
 “ took the customary oath, should swear besides to make an in-
 “ cursion twice a year into Megaris ; and that Anthemocritus
 “ should be buried near the Thriasian gate, which is now called
 “ Dipylon. The Megarensians, however, absolutely deny the
 “ murder of Anthemocritus, and charge the whole guilt of the
 “ war upon Aspasia and Pericles ; in confirmation of which they
 “ quote those well known verses from the *Acharnenses* of Aristo-
 “ phanes :

“ Some drunken youths from Athens went
 “ To Megara, on mischief bent ;
 “ And thence (their valour to display)
 “ The whore Simætha stole away.
 “ Rage fires the Megarensian throng ;
 “ With int'rest they repay the wrong ;
 “ And ent'ring good Aspasia's doors,
 “ From her they force two fav'rite whores.
 “ Behold the spring of all our woe !
 “ Hence discord, war, and slaughter flow.

“ The real cause of this war is very difficult to discover ; but that
 “ the above-mentioned decree was not repealed, is universally
 “ ascribed to Pericles.”

It will be necessary to add another passage from the same ancient author. “ The Lacedæmonians, and their allies, soon after entered Attica with a great army under the conduct of king Archidamus. They laid waste the whole country, and advanced as far as Acharnæ, where they encamped, expecting that the Athenians would not patiently suffer them to continue there, but that pride and indignation would provoke them to fight. Pericles, however, thought it too dangerous an experiment to risk no less than the preservation of the city itself upon an engagement with sixty thousand Lacedæmonian and Bœotian troops, for that was the number employed in the first expedition. As to those who being exasperated by the devastations which the Lacedæmonians had committed, were eager to come to a battle, he endeavoured to cool and pacify them, by saying, *that trees, after they are lopped, will soon grow again, but when men are cut off, the loss is not easily repaired* *.” For the enemies’ design by thus laying waste the country of the Acharnenses, which was the most beautiful part of Attica, was to draw the Athenians to a general action, which would necessarily have decided the fate of Athens; or to excite the Acharnenses to revolt, by shewing them with what insensibility their chief abandoned them to pillage. Pericles did not alter his conduct, but saved Athens, as Fabius saved Rome, by temporising for a while. He despised the censures that were cast on him, and cantoned himself in the city : the great actions he had performed, left him no room to apprehend that his reputation could suffer from this management. Mean time, the citizens were divided in their sentiments, and the commonwealth seemed like a pilot in the midst of a tempest. The Acharnenses particularly were desirous of fighting. Cleon himself, whose popularity, and whose great influence with the citizens we shall soon shew, was the first to animate the populace against Pericles. But the able statesman bore all patiently, and altered not his conduct : he caused the war to be carried into the Peloponnesus by sea ; and when the city had no

* Plutarch’s Lives, vol. II. printed for Tonson, 1758.

longer need of his presence to restrain it within the bounds of its duty, he went himself in person to chastise the Megarensians.

While these mutual depredations lasted (and they lasted a long time), the Athenians made application to two or three kings, who soothed them with hopes of very considerable succours: but apparently their policy led them to amuse both parties, and to let them destroy each other. The Athenian senators suffered themselves to be deluded with the hopes of these supplies, and deluded the people likewise, that they might protract affairs, as Aristophanes reproaches them to their faces. The first of these kings, whom they supposed to have engaged in their interests, was Sithalces, king of Thrace, who was solicited by his brother-in-law Nymphodores, a native of Abdera*, to espouse the cause of the Athenians, and whose son and presumptive heir, Sadocus, had been admitted to the privileges of a citizen of Athens. The Abderah promised, that the king should pacify Thrace, where the war was kindled, and that the commonwealth should soon have the Thracian forces at its service. Perdiccas, the son of Alexander†, king of Macedon, was another prince whose assistance they depended upon, and the third was the king of Persia‡; we shall name the others as we shall have occasion in our account of the comedy. It is necessary also to remember, that Pericles died two years and a half after the commencement of the Peloponesian war, and that this war commenced in the second year of the 87th Olympiad, 431 years before Jesus Christ.

There are in this comedy of Aristophanes a great number of characters. The poet's design being, as I have already observed, to shew, by an allegory, how greatly peace is to be preferred to war. He introduces a man, whom he calls the good citizen, although he suffers him to say and to act very great buffoonries. The poet feigns, that this man hit upon a way to make an agreement with the enemy, and to enjoy alone the advantages of peace, while the Acharnenses, the Megarensians, and the people of Athens, suffered all the hardships of war, deceived as they were by the promises or threats of the senate, and by the ambition of their general Lamachus, whose particular interest it was to prolong the war.

* Abdera, a maritime city of Thrace, built by Hercules, after he had conquered Diomedes, according to the fable.

† Alexander, the son of Amyntas.

‡ Darius Nothus.

Neither the state, nor the generals, nor the memory of Pericles, are spared in this very singular comedy.

A C T I.

Dicæopolis, the good citizen, appears alone (he is an Acharnenian full of grief for the losses he has suffered), and recalling to mind all the causes he has for affliction, he finds he has one, and one only for joy, namely, that Cleon has been obliged to vomit up (this is his phrase) the five talents * he had received. He was charged, says the scholiast †, with having taken from certain islanders five talents, on condition of prevailing upon the commonwealth to remit part of their annual tribute. The knights ‡, his declared enemies, entered a process against him, and obliged him to spew them up ||, to use Aristophanes's term. He compliments the knights upon this, as being an action worthy of Greece.

But, on the other hand, Dicæopolis is grieved to find that every thing is changed in Athens; that even taste is not what it was before: as for example, the tragedies of Theognis are preferred to those of Eschylus. Here he falls upon certain poets, and musicians: it is his passion. At last he grows impatient at being obliged to wait so long for the people's assembling; he complains, that each one amuses himself in the market-place, and endeavours to avoid the strokes of the coloured cord, which are given to the idle, that they may be known, and made to pay their fine; he adds, that the very magistrates are in no haste to come, disposed, like all the rest, to rush in, in swarms, and struggle for the best places. All this prepares us for an assembly of the people §. “But, alas! says he, they have no concern how to procure peace. I am the only one who wishes for it, and who regrets my village.” The reason he assigns for

* A talent is a thousand crowns.

† After Theopompus.

‡ The knights were the second of the four orders in Athens, we shall speak of this in another place.

|| Madame Dacier says, that these five talents were given to Aristophanes for having played Cleon in his comedy of the *Knights*; but this is a palpable mistake.

§ The place, where the people assembled,

was called *πρυτανίον*, in allusion to a plentiful harvest. The principal magistrates were called Prytanians, *Πρυτανίαι*, on account of the place where they met on extraordinary occasions, which was named the Prytanium. This was a large building, where those citizens who had distinguished themselves by any signal services to the republic, were maintained at its expence.

this

this is, that his field does not say to him, Go, buy fuel, oil, and vinegar; it produces all he has occasion for.

Dicæopolis, weary of so many assemblies which produce nothing, goes to this with a settled resolution, to throw every thing into confusion, if peace, which he so ardently pants after, is not mentioned. Immediately the stage is crowded with the magistrates of the Prytanium, who hasten to get the first places. A herald * ranges them in order, and asks, *who will speak* †. Amphitheus rises up; he begins with proving his descent from the Gods, and that those Gods have commanded him to propose peace. This Amphitheus represents an illustrious beggar; for, after setting forth his divine genealogy, he complains that he is not master of a farthing. But at the bare mention of peace with the Lacedæmonians, they drive him away. Dicæopolis remonstrates against this brutal usage of a man, who shews that he has the good of his country at heart. They bid him be silent: he renews his remonstrances. At that instant notice is given, that the ambassadors, who had been sent by the Athenians to the court of the king of Persia, are returned. This scene is curious enough. The ambassadors begin with declaring, that it is twelve years ‡ since they were sent upon this embassy to Persia, with the allowance of two drachmas || a day. The poet here ridicules those who solicit to be sent on embassies, and protract them in order to enrich themselves. In this piece of satire he has a view likewise to the government, which he taxes with profusion in these senseless deputations. The ambassadors declare, that they suffered many fatigues during their journey, but that they were very well received. They used to eat and drink largely, they say, to recommend themselves to the Persians, who esteemed none that were not great eaters and drinkers. The burlesque reason which they assign for their long stay, is an enumeration of all the feasts they were obliged to give them. At length, for the fruits of their embassy they produce Pseudartabanus, the king's favourite, who had been sent with them to Athens. This account is frequently interrupted by Dicæopolis, who talks aside, and deploras the infatuation of the republic.

* Aristophanes often sneers at this mean solicitude.

† This was the usual form.

‡ Since the archonship of Euthymenus; that is to say, long ago.

|| One drachma is ten pence.

The Satrap answers the questions put to him, in his barbarous language, and in a manner wholly unintelligible. Dicæopolis draws him aside, and coming directly to the point, asks him, if the king had sent money to Athens, and whither the deputies did not impose upon the people? He himself answers for the Satrap, as if he made signs to him, which signified *no* to the first question, and *yes* to the second. He is interrupted by the herald, who tells the Satrap, that the senate intreat him to go to the Prytanium *, where he will be honourably received. Dicæopolis is enraged at this artifice. How! says he, must those honours, which are due only to real ambassadors, be paid to a pretended one? What stupidity, to be seduced by such masquerades, because we are flattered with false hopes of succours against the Lacedæmonians! Such is the opinion, however, of the good citizen. He draws Amphitheus aside, and whispers him in the ear to have nothing to do with the ambassadors and the government. "Take these two drachmas which I give you, says he, and purchase an alliance for me and my family only with the Lacedæmonians. And now, gentlemen, pursues he aloud, send and receive ambassadors as long as you please."

The herald now summons Theorus, who had been deputed by the Athenians to the king of Thrace.

DICÆOPOLIS. (*aside.*)

Here is another impostor now, who is paid for deluding us.

THEORUS.

"I should not have staid so long in Thrace, if ———"

DICÆOPOLIS. (*aside.*)

If thou hadst not been well bribed.

THEORUS.

If the snow and the frost had not made the roads so bad, there was no travelling. For while Theognis exhibited a play here (a malicious illusion to his cold poetry), I was drinking with king Sithalces. It is certain, that he adores Athens, and we have not a better friend in the world. Believe me, he carries his passion for us so far as to inscribe these words on his walls, *Charming*

* A palace where ambassadors were lodged. See the preceding note §, p. 182.

Athenians *. His son, whom we have made an Athenian, is extremely desirous of partaking our feasts, and has intreated the king his father to let him pay a visit to his new country. As for the king, he swore, during the ceremony of a sacrifice, that he would send us the promised succours; and he has such numerous armies, that when we behold them, we shall cry out, What an immense number of wide throats have we here †!

DICAËPOLIS.

May I be hanged, if I believe a word of all this.

THEORUS.

Nay he has sent with us the bravest troops of Thrace.

The herald calls them. They are Odomantes †, a savage people, great eaters of garlick, and they demand two drachmas a day for their pay; this is very remarkable. Dicaëpolis, dissatisfied with these auxiliary troops, who devour the commonwealth, finds means to make the assembly break up under a superstitious pretence. All retire, except Dicaëpolis, who perceives his friend Amphytheus approaching. Amphytheus, as we may observe, returns surprisingly soon. But here Aristophanes is less solicitous to preserve probability, than to make the spectators laugh, as appears by the ridiculous assembly he represents, and by his boldness in sporting with the characters of kings, ambassadors, Athens, and her allies.

" I flew (says Amphytheus) to bring you peace. My design
" was discovered by some austere old men, true warriors of Ma-
" rathon ||, in a word, Athenians, they bawled out aloud: Ah!
" traitor,

* Alluding to a custom among the shepherds of engraving their mistress's name upon their crooks.

† A satirical stroke against those voracious foreign troops, who devour the state they come to assist.

‡ The Odomantes were a people near the river Strymon.

|| This has the air of raillery. The Athenians held their ancient warriors, who fought in the battle of Marathon, in the highest veneration. They perpetuated the memory of those prodigies of valour which were performed there, by a great number of monuments. Eschylus had his as well as Miltiades, according to Pausanias (in *Attica*).
" The Marathonians say, adds he, that,
" during the battle, there appeared a man
" clad and armed like a peasant, that he
" killed a great number of the barbarians
" with a kind of plough-share, and afterwards
" vanished. The oracle being consulted
" upon
B b

" traitor, thou bringest peace, and all our vines are burnt ! Here-
 " upon they took up stones : I fled ; but they continued to pur-
 " sue me with cries and exclamations."

DICÆOPOLIS.

Let them exclaim : where are the treaties ?

AMPHITHEUS.

I have samples of three sorts. Here is some of five years old,
 taste it. (*He speaks as of wines.*)

DICÆOPOLIS, *making mouths.*

Paugh, it smells of the pitch and tar of the ship it was brought
 in. (*Alluding to the fleets that they had equipped for war.*)

AMPHITHEUS.

Taste one of ten years old.

DICÆOPOLIS, *shaking his head.*

This is still a little bitter : it tastes of the goings and comings
 of ambassadors, and of the allies' delay.

AMPHITHEUS.

Well then, here is another that has been thirty years upon
 land and sea.

DICÆOPOLIS.

Give it me, give it me instantly. Oh Gods ! this is pure am-
 brosia, true nectar, &c.

This is only one example of the numerous allegories to be
 found in Aristophanes. Dicæopolis, contented with having his
 receipt which frees him for the future from all apprehensions,
 thanks his friend Amphitheus, who retires, that he may not meet
 the Acharnenses, who pursue him ; and Dicæopolis goes to his
 house to prepare a sacrifice to Bacchus, in acknowledgement for the
 benefit he had just received.

" upon this occasion, gave the Athenians
 " no other answer, but that they must re-
 " vere the Hero of the Plough. Accord-

" ingly they erected a monument of white
 " marble to his honour."

When

When he is gone, the Acharnenses enter tumultuously, and divide into two Demi-chorusses, seeking every where, but in vain, this bearer of treaties, that they may stone him; as if a treaty of peace was, in their opinion, prohibited merchandize.

ACT II.

The first scene is taken up with the sacrifice offered by Dicæopolis to Bacchus. He enters, followed by his wife, his daughter, and his servants, who bring every thing necessary for the sacrifice, and every person he meets he charges to keep silence. I shall dwell no longer upon this scene, nor upon the prayer of him who offers the sacrifice, I shall only take notice of one passage in it, which fixes the date of this piece.

“ Oh Phalez! to thee I address myself this sixth year*, in which I behold again my dear country, after having made a particular treaty with the Lacedæmonians. Behold me now delivered from my enemies, from my anxiety, and from the Lamachus’s!” Lamachus was one of the Athenian generals, who played his part in this comedy; that is, who was ridiculed here personally, notwithstanding his great dignity and brave exploits.

The Chorus, hearing Dicæopolis mention treaties, turn all their rage against him, and prepare to stone him. The citizen intreats to be heard in his defence. This produces an artifice of the stage. The Acharnenses exclaim against the Lacedæmonians, as a people without honour and integrity. Dicæopolis undertakes to justify them, and to prove, that they were not the authors of the calamities of Greece. But the rage of the Chorus increases; their countryman in vain implores their mercy; they determine to stone him; and Dicæopolis can think of no other way to deliver himself out of their hands, than by threatening to kill their friends whom he keeps as hostages. This threat is a riddle to them. “ Has he any of our children in his possession?” they say. But he unfolds the mystery by a jest, in which he burlesques the *Telephus*†

* The Peloponnesian war had lasted six years when this comedy was acted. This date is fixed by another passage, where it is said, that they had not for six years seen any eels of Copays, a lake of Bœotia, on

account of the war, which interrupted that traffic.

† A tragedy written by Euripides, which is lost.

of Euripides. For, as Telephus, to preserve himself from the fury of the Greeks, threatens to kill Orestes, so Dicæopolis draws his sword, in order to pierce (who would have imagined it) a sack of coals. We cannot find out any thing here to laugh at, even though we could fancy ourselves at Athens, unless it be a parody. As for the coals which the Acharnenses are so fond of, that they implore mercy for them with comic tears, I know not where the jest lies, unless the poet means, that the vines of Acharnia having been burnt, they were so dear to the inhabitants, that they revered even their ashes; or because they loved large fires in winter, and were no enemies to good cheer; or merely because they trafficked in coals. And therefore, Aristophanes makes the Chorus, which is composed of old men, say, that they are no longer as swift as Phayllus *, although loaded with sacks of coals. However this may be, the poet generally connects the idea of charcoal with the inhabitants of Acharnia, that he almost always represents them as invoking a coal-muse; for he compares her to the smoke of a fire when meat is broiling on it. We must excuse these manners, and this sort of raillery, in a republic where nobles and plebeians, rich and poor, were all equally free, and had a right to mix in affairs of state. Dicæopolis continues to turn the whole scene of Telephus into burlesque, jesting upon the terror of these dealers in charcoal, whom he had threatened: at length, he pardons them, and sheaths his sword, when the Acharnenses have thrown away their stones.

A truce being concluded between Dicæopolis and his countrymen, he determines to speak to them in favour of the Lacedæmonians, although this appears to him a very delicate point. For, according to him, the Athenians, and all the inhabitants of the borough-towns of Attica, would be flattered, praised, and caressed by orators. They are not willing to see that they are betrayed: their delight is in hearing causes from morning till night, especially in condemning the accused, without troubling themselves about affairs of the highest consequence to Greece and the state. Thus it was that Demosthenes reproved the Athenians from the rostrum; and in reading the works of our poet, it will be found that I have

* Phayllus was celebrated for his swift-
ness in running. By an epigram, quoted
by the scholiast, we learn, that he leaped to
the distance of fifty feet.

reason for saying, he reprov'd them no less sharply upon the stage. "I know (adds Dicaeopolis, speaking in the character of Aristophanes), I know what I suffered for the comedy I exhibited last year. Cleon dragg'd me before their tribunal, and with a horrid bellowing * he discharged upon me whole torrents of calumnies and impostures; in a word, I thought I should have perished amidst the filthy mire he plung'd me into." The comedy he speaks of was call'd the *Babylonians* †, and it is probable that Cleon was severely handled in it. This piece having been acted in the spring, during the ceremony of the Dionysial festivals, in the presence of the allies, who then brought their respective tributes to Athens, Cleon took occasion from thence to accuse the poet of having expos'd the citizens and the state to the ridicule of strangers. He even disputed his claim to the privileges of a citizen of Attica: Aristophanes extricated himself out of this troublesome business in the manner which we have already related in the foregoing discourse. In his representation of the comedy of the *Acharnenses* he no longer found himself liable to the same prosecution, because it was play'd during the Lenean festivals, towards the end of autumn, at a time when there were no strangers in the city. It was this which made him speak so freely, and more freely than ever of the commonwealth and of Cleon. The suit, which Cleon commenc'd against him, gave occasion for the following comedy call'd the *Knights*.

The villager, having ended his complaints, hits upon a ludicrous stratagem to speak in favour of the Lacedæmonians without danger: this is to disguise himself like a beggar, the better to excite compassion. "But, why these arts, say the Chorus, take me the infernal casque us'd by the poet Jerome, and plead like a Sisyphus ‡." The Jerome, here ridicul'd, was a tragic poet

* Cleon's voice was very loud and harsh, as we shall have occasion to observe in the sequel.

† A comedy which has not come down to us.

‡ Sisyphus, according to the fable, returned from the infernal regions. See Philoetetes, vol. i. part i. Noel de Comti relates this story after Demetrius upon the

Olympics of Pindar, in the following manner: "Others maintain, that Sisyphus was condemned to roll a stone incessantly in hell, for having treacherously deceived the infernal spirits, saying, that after his death, he descended to Tartarus, and there gave Pluto a cast of his office. Just before he expired, he commanded his wife to throw his body in the midst of the street, without burying it."

poet* of a wild imagination, and wholly destitute of judgment: he aimed at inspiring terror, and sometimes was applauded. He had a thick black head of hair, which Aristophanes called an infernal peruke, or casque, in allusion to a proverb applied to such as made themselves invisible by magical arts.

The citizen of Acharnia, in order to execute his scheme, knocks at the door of Euripides's house. His slave Cephisophon opens it. Is Euripides within? says the villager. He is, and he is not, answers the slave †. Being desired to explain himself, he says, that indeed the body of Euripides is within, but that his soul was beating the field to collect some little verses. Euripides is called: he suffers himself to be intreated a long time. At length he appears; and Dicæopolis, with that sarcastic air which Aristophanes always assumes when Euripides is in question, intreats the poet to bestow upon him, as an alms, one of those tattered tragic robes, in which he dresses his heroes; "For, says he, I am to make a long speech to these people, and if I do not pronounce it properly, they will murder me."

Euripides names several of his tragedies to him; but the villager always answers: "That is not the one I mean; there is another, the hero of which is still more deplorable." At length Telephus is named. "That is the very thing, cries Dicæopolis, it is his rags I would have." "Who is there? howls out Euripides to his servants; one of you bring hither the tattered robes of Telephus; you will find them lying on those of Hyestus, and among Ino's ‡.

The tattered robes of Telephus are brought, and Dicæopolis, as he is putting them on, utters some railleries, all in the same taste; such as that, on this occasion, he must seem a beggar, and

"it. Which she doing, he intreated Pluto's permission to go back to the world, that he might punish his wife for this neglect, promising to return again to hell immediately afterwards. His request being granted upon that condition, away he went; but having breathed the air of this world again, he would not return to the other, till Mercury collaring him, carried him away by force, and put the decree of the Gods against him

"into execution." Others will have it, that he was punished thus for having forced his niece Tyrrho.

* Suidas.

† This seems to be a parody upon some ambiguous answers in the same taste, which are to be found in the tragedies of Euripides, as when he says of Alcestes, *she lives, and she lives not*. See *Alcestes*, vol. ii. act. i. sc. 4.

‡ These tragedies are lost.

not be one; that he must be a rich man in the opinion of the audience, and a poor one in appearance, in order to impose upon the stupid Acharnenses with unmeaning words.

Being now metamorphosed into a beggar, he continues to importune Euripides with his burlesque petitions for alms: he intreats him to give him a bundle of herbs, such as his mother sold. Aristophanes often reproaches Euripides with his being the son of a woman who sold greens. But whether this circumstance be true or false, a discussion of it would be useless, and very difficult. All this, however, at the time was excessively severe. Euripides, in a rage, shuts his door in the face of Dicæopolis; who now assumes the character of Telephus, and all the manner and gestures suitable to that character. He calls up all his courage, and having obtained permission of one half of the Chorus, he begins his harangue, or rather his parody upon a beautiful scene in the tragedy of Telephus. We may form a judgment of these parodies upon the tragedies that are lost, by those we shall see upon some that are preserved to us.

The following is the subject of the good citizen's harangue, in which we are to suppose the bitterness of this parody consists. Dicæopolis intreats the Acharnenses, not to be offended at his presuming to speak of state-affairs; for, although a beggar, he is composing a tragedy, and a tragedy always chuses for its object that which is just. He adds, that Cleon cannot now accuse him of calumniating the republic before strangers*. Such is the exordium. He afterwards declares, that he hates the Lacedæmonians. "But after all, says he, why should we lay the ruin of our vineyards to their charge? However, I speak not of Athens, gentlemen; remember, I say, that I do not speak of the state: but some desperate fellows, without faith, honour, birth, regardless of the laws, and of infamous characters, have slandered the Megarensians. In their eyes every thing was Megarian: whatever was brought to the market was considered as such, and, for that reason, confiscated. But this is little. Some of our young citizens, intoxicated with wine, went to Megara, and carried

* It is plain by the words of Aristophanes himself, that this comedy was acted during the feasts of Bacchus towards the close of

autumn, when no strangers were suffered to be in the city.

“ off Simætha. The Megarensians, in revenge, robbed Aspasia of
 “ two of her courtesans. See the source of that war which has
 “ deluged all Greece. Three courtesans! For this Pericles storms:
 “ for this he has thundered * in the senate, and filled all Greece
 “ with the tumult of war: for this that fatal decree was made,
 “ by which the Megarensians were interdicted land and sea. This
 “ people, forced by dire necessity, implored the Lacedæmonians to
 “ solicit for them the revocation of so dreadful a decree given upon
 “ the most trifling occasion. We would not listen to their intrea-
 “ ties and submissions: from hence arose the tumult of arms, and
 “ all the rage of war. There needed not this, they will say:
 “ tell us then, what is to be done?” That is, how are the Lace-
 dæmonians to behave? Accordingly, Dicæopolis produces a lu-
 dicrous example to the Athenians, but which admits of no answer.
 “ If a Lacedæmonian, says he, should carry away a dog from
 “ Seriphus †, the least of all your islands, would you not imme-
 “ diately fit out thirty ships of war to revenge this injury?” &c.

The Chorus are divided into two bands, one of which ap-
 proves, the other condemns the orator's speech. One maintains,
 that he has spoke the truth; the other alleges, that he ought not
 to have spoken it. Both sides make a great clamour, and their
 animosity increases to such a degree, that Lamachus is called upon
 with loud cries to come and allay the tumult.

This sound of war brings Lamachus instantly on the stage. He
 seems in a mighty fluster, and full of anxiety, as if the enemy
 had surprised Athens, or that it was a real sedition. They tell
 him, that a beggar has dared to talk of state-affairs, and slandered
 the republic. Dicæopolis, with mock reverence, supplicates the
 great Lamachus to grant him a moment's audience. He pretends
 to be frightened at the sight of the armour and plumes of the ter-
 rible warrior; for so he styles him, trembling, to heighten the ri-
 dicule. This, if I am not mistaken, is a burlesque imitation of
 the parting of Hector and Andrômaché, which is one of the
 finest passages in the Iliad. Hector, when he takes leave of his
 wife to go to the field, from whence he never returned alive, ob-

* Cicero has quoted this passage to shew
 the character of Pericles's eloquence.

† Seriphus, a little island in the Ægean

sea, one of the Cyclades, a barren rock,
 and in Aristophanes's time almost deserted.

serves that the infant Astyanax, whom she held in her arms, was frightened at the plume of feathers which he wore on his helmet, and the poet tells us, that the hero pulled it off. Dicaëopolis, in great terror, begs Lamachus to lay aside his tremendous casque. The general, who is sensible of the raillery, grows angry; but the counterfeited beggar, quitting his assumed character, acts the angry man in his turn, and, provided with his treaties as with a shield, faces his adversary boldly. He reproaches him in plain terms with his having procured the post of general by bribes, not by services to the commonwealth: he insults him on account of his youth and inactivity, while he profits (like many others) of the rewards due only to valour. Oh! republic, cries Lamachus, can these outrages be borne with! No, answers Dicaëopolis, there would be no cause for them, if thou wert not in the service of the republic.

Lamachus swears to maintain eternal war against the Peloponnesians; and Dicaëopolis, by virtue of his treaties, permits them all a free commerce with Athens, except for Lamachus. Both going away, the Chorus sing one of those satirical interludes, which I shall call a discourse to the audience.

In this interlude the Chorus undertake the defence of the poet, who in this manner clears himself of the calumnies which his enemies had propagated against him. He justifies himself in particular against the accusation of his having slandered the people and the state in his comedies*. On the contrary, he alleges, that he deserves great rewards for having endeavoured to undeceive the Athenians with regard to the vain promises made them by foreign nations. But he justifies himself with great haughtiness and scorn. More a cynic, and no less daring than Demosthenes, he treats his fellow-citizens like children and dupes: he reproaches them with their weakness in suffering themselves to be seduced by the idle admiration which strangers express of the beauty of their city, and yet do nothing for her, while he alone has the courage to tell them the truth in a public theatre, with the hazard of his life. He adds, that, by this title of a rigid reformer, he has excited the curiosity of all the allies of Athens; that his fame has

* In some which are not extant, especially in the *Babylonians*. The first of them was called the *Daitalians*.

reached even the Persian monarch, who, in a conversation he had one day with the Lacedæmonian ambassadors, after having asked them, which of the people of Greece had the greatest naval force, he next enquired for Aristophanes, and desired to know what were the usual subjects of his satirical pieces; adding, that his councils tended only to the good of his country, and that, if the Athenians followed them, they would be masters of all Greece.

"It was through hatred to Aristophanes, continue the Chorus, that the Lacedæmonians demanded that Egina should be delivered up to them as a preliminary article to the peace; not that they did really set any value upon this port, but that they might revenge themselves on our poet *."

The Chorus conclude with advising the audience to suffer Aristophanes to go on in his usual way, since he had nothing in view but the public good; and this he would forward with all his power, not by mean adulation, and pliant artifices, but by salutary councils: and, therefore, he defies Cleon. And why, indeed, should he fear him, having equity and candour on his side, secure likewise that he would never incur the reproach of being careless and cowardly, when the interest of Athens was in question, as his enemy had done? Certainly, there is no longer any commonwealth subsisting, wherein such free language might be used to the state, and persons of the highest dignity in it.

I have dwelt the longer upon this article, because it throws great light upon the personal enmity between Cleon and Aristophanes, upon the reputation of that poet, and upon the nature of the old comedy. It were to be wished, that we had as good a key to many other circumstances, particularly to the enmity between Aristophanes and Euripides. The Chorus conclude the act with a reprimand to the republic for raising young citizens to the chief offices of the government, and to the command of armies, in preference to the old. This is levelled at Lamachus, who was young, and had not yet distinguished himself by those brave actions, which forced Aristophanes at length to do him justice.

* Aristophanes must certainly have had an estate in Egina, and Cleon glances a reflection at him on that account.

ACT III.

What remains of this piece is neither long, nor curious, and, therefore, we shall pass slightly over it. Dicaëopolis returns, and marks out upon the stage the market to which he permits the Peloponnesians, the Megarensians, and the Boeotians, to come and traffic; but excludes Lamachus, as he had before declared to him he would. He regulates every thing, as if he was absolute master there, by virtue of his treaty with Lacedæmon.

The market being opened, a Megarensian, half starved on account of the interruption which trade had suffered during the war, comes with provisions to sell. It is his children, whom he instructs to counterfeit the grunting of hogs that he may sell them. This is a scene of very low humour. An informer follows, and cries *horo*, that he may share in the confiscation. Dicaëopolis soon silences him. Another scene, better contrived, to shew, that, when peace is concluded, they will no longer bear with Cleonymus, Hyperbolus, or any rogues like them (and he names them), wretches who are always ready to accuse their fellow-citizens, and to enrich themselves by informations.

ACT IV.

A rich Boeotian enters, loaded with all sorts of herbs, fish, and game of every kind, which he brings to the market to sell. Instantly another informer hastens after him, who is hooted at with scorn. Lamachus sends his servant to purchase some provision for him, but the poor fellow is cruelly driven away. The Chorus begin to be sensible of the blessings of peace, and to wish ardently for it. A herald proclaims this peace to the whole family of Dicaëopolis, and exhorts him to celebrate it by a feast. A poor labourer, who had lost his oxen, would fain partake of it; and a young bridegroom offers Dicaëopolis a present to be allowed, if possible, to share in his happiness. But this uncommunicable happiness is reserved for Dicaëopolis, who alone knew the value of peace, and how to procure it. Two messengers enter, one of whom asks for Lamachus, and tells him, that he must instantly fly to arms, and repell the Boeotians; the other brings Dicaëopolis an invitation to a feast. This makes a most ridiculous contrast;

for Lamachus goes with great reluctance to fight, and the villager hastens joyfully to the feast, after indulging himself in some bitter railleries upon the general, and a continued antitheses supported by the terms of war and cookery.

ACT V.

A courier enters, and, in a burlesque manner, declares, that Lamachus is wounded, and returning with those who fled from the battle. He is brought in, lamenting his hard fate, and serves to make sport for Dicaopolis, who has dined luxuriously.

Those who are acquainted with the writings, of Aristophanes, will not be displeased with me for this brevity upon the last acts of the comedy before us. There are whole pieces of the same author, on which it would be difficult, and very unnecessary to dwell longer.

THE

THE
KNIGHTS:

A

COMEDY OF ARISTOPHANES.

This Comedy was acted the seventh year of the Peloponnesian war, at the feasts of Bacchus Lenean, the fourth year of the 88th Olympiad, under the archonship of Stratocles.

"**S**OLON being willing (says Plutarch) to continue all offices of magistracy in the hands of the rich men, as they had been, and yet to bring a mixture of the people into the other parts of the government, of which they had no share before, took an account of the citizens estates, and those whose estates produced five hundred *medimni*, both in dry and liquid fruits, he placed in the first rank, calling them *Pentacosiomedimnes*; those of the second class, who were such as could keep a horse, or were worth annually three hundred *medimni*, were named *Hippodotolountes*; the third class consisted of such whose revenue amounted to but two hundred *medimni*, and they were called *Zeugites*: all the others were called *Tbetes*; these were not admitted to any office, but might come to the great assembly, and give their votes. This, at first, seemed nothing, but afterwards appeared a considerable privilege: for most of the controversies came, at last, to these popular judges; because, in all matters which he put under the cognizance of the magistrates, he gave such as pleased liberty to appeal to the popular court *."

* Plutarch's Lives, vol. I. printed for Tonson, 1758.

The title of this piece being so well explained, it will be easy to see that it is a severe satire against Cleon, the treasurer and general of the army. It was private animosity, as well as concern for the public good, that induced Aristophanes to exclaim in this furious manner at a man so powerful in the state. Cleon had accused the poet of a very atrocious crime, as we have already observed, and had likewise called in question his right of a citizen of Athens. Such was the secret cause of this bitterness of satire against Cleon. However, this statesman was insolent to excess; no author ever mentioned him with praise. Although the son of a leatherdresser, and a leatherdresser himself, he had risen to the first employments of the state; but it was by artifice and intrigue, and probably by a kind of merit absolutely necessary in a republic. He had a thundering voice, and no man ever possessed in a greater degree the art of gaining the people over to his interests. Intoxicated with the surprising success of an enterprise he rashly engaged in, a success which he owed more to fortune than to courage, he became in a manner master of the state; and it was when he was at the height of his power and fame, that Aristophanes durst venture to attack him, no longer indirectly, but by producing him personally upon the stage. Cleon is reproached with embezzling the public treasure, with an eager desire of procuring presents, with his art in seducing the people, and with unjustly arrogating to himself the merit of a glorious exploit. The manner in which he raised himself to so great a height of power is as follows.

Pylos*, a little city of Peloponesus, situated on the sea-side, opposite to the island of Sphaacteria, and in the territory of Coryphæum, had been abandoned, and stript of its garrison, as well as many other places, during the course of the war. Demosthenes, who had come there with two ships, prevailed upon Eurymedon and Sophocles, though with great difficulty, to fortify it, and to make it a magazine of arms, from whence they might infect the Lacedæmonians, who were within four hundred stadia† of it. This scheme was executed, and proved of such importance to the Lacedæmonians, that they used their utmost efforts to retake Pylos: it even became the principal object of Athens and Lacedæmon till the end of the war. The Lacedæmonians laid siege to it, and, that they might the more easily compass their end, they threw

* Thucydides, lib. iv.

† Twenty leagues.

some troops into a little neighbouring island; but the fleets of both parties being continually near, the troops in the island were blocked up, and reduced to great scarcity. Neither did the Athenians suffer less hardships in Pylos: so that they, as well as the enemies, were alike besieged and besiegers, the former in the city, the latter in the island. Mean time the Lacedæmonians sent deputies to Athens to demand an honourable composition, in order to draw their troops from Sphacteria. Their request was not only just, but even made with submission, as is evident by their harangue in Thucydides. But Cleon warmly opposed any agreement with the Lacedæmonians, and went so far as to abuse their ambassadors. Demosthenes, finding himself in great want of provisions, and hopeless of any succours, sent his colleague Nicias to Athens, to prevail upon the republic, either to succour the army, or to enter into a treaty with the enemy. The people of Athens, enraged at this bad success, began to exclaim against Cleon, who, to turn aside their resentment from him, threw the fault upon the incapacity, or the dilatoriness of the two generals, and publicly boasted, that if the Athenians would make him general, he would take the island in twenty days. Nicias took him at his word; and Cleon, who supposed that this readiness, to accept his proposal, was only feigned, held firm till he found that Nicias was in earnest resolved to lay down the command; then he began to raise a great many difficulties, that his rash promise might be forgot. But the people would not be his dupes, and, what was very surprising, they made him general against his will, and ordered him to depart for the siege. He was, however, more fortunate than he had been prudent: for while he was on his march, Demosthenes burnt a little wood in the island, by which his troops had been greatly incommoded, and thus made the conquest of Sphacteria so easy, that he had no longer occasion for succours. Cleon arrived, joined his troops to his, and both together forced the soldiers who were in the island to surrender, and carried them to Athens in a miserable condition. Cleon, contrary to expectation, returning triumphant, became more than ever the idol of the people, who gave him the whole honour of this conquest, and looked upon him as the greatest captain of the age. It was this unjust praise which made him odious to the principal Athenians, and particularly to the knights, who had always hated him on account of the meanness of his birth, and the great employments he had obtained in prejudice to their better claim. Aristophanes had the courage to unmask this despicable man,

man, and to make him the subject of a comedy, regardless of his power. But he was obliged to act the part of Cleon himself; and it was on this occasion that he appeared upon the stage for the first time, none of the comedians daring to assume this character, nor to expose themselves to the vengeance of so powerful a citizen. Aristophanes daubed his face with lees of wine, for want of a mask, not being able to find any artist bold enough to make one resembling Cleon, as was done for such persons as were to be ridiculed upon the stage.

Two reasons may be assigned why this piece cannot afford us as much diversion as it did the Athenians, namely an infinite number of personal strokes against a man who is wholly indifferent to us, and a style made up of enigmas and anecdotes, of which it is not always possible to discover the true sense. However, we shall omit nothing essential to the principal design.

ACT I.

The scene opens with Demosthenes and Nicias, clad in the habit of slaves: the former roars out aloud, as if he had just suffered the lash. He wishes, Tartarus would swallow up that upstart, that cursed Paphlagonian*, who had lately got footing in their house, and who was continually whipping the slaves in the cruellest manner imaginable. This is an ingenious allegory. By the house is meant Athens, the Paphlagonian is Cleon, not that he was a native of Paphlagonia, but in allusion† to his hoarse, rough voice which resembled the roaring waves. The slaves are the principal citizens of the republic, such as Demosthenes and Nicias, also the republic herself. The master of the house is the people. This satire is levelled as much against the state, and the people, as against Cleon.

We find, therefore, that Plutarch's charge against Aristophanes, for making his orators speak like slaves, without observing a due decorum in his characters, falls of itself. For, having chosen the way of allegory, to represent the greatest captains and wisest men of the state as slaves to a capricious old man, who was wholly go-

* Paphlagonia, a region of Asia Minor, the inhabitants of which, Lucian says, are superstitious and foolish.

† *παφλαγῶν, servus.*

verned by a despicable fellow, by whom they were treated cruelly, could he better preserve the propriety of character than by making them speak and act like real slaves? It is true, that he goes beyond nature; but if he exaggerates, it is to point the ridicule fuller upon Cleon, upon the magistrates, the people, and the whole government.

Nicias also curses the new comer, and invites his friend and companion in arms, to join with him in a musical song or lamentation, which is the more ridiculous as it is a parody upon an air worthy of Olympus the musician *. Demosthenes advises him to cease weeping, and to consider of some way to deliver themselves. This gives rise to a contest between them, for each would have the other pronounce the important, the decisive resolution. Nicias attempts to speak it in the style of Euripides, to declare, and not to declare it, to speak in a covert and unintelligible manner, in allusion to the artful and perplexed way in which Phædra discovers to her confidant her passion for Hippolytus.

*Tu connois ce fils de l' Amazone ;
Ce prince si long-tems par moi-même opprimé.*

OE N O N E.

Hippolyte, grand Dieux !

P H E D R E.

C'est toi qui l'as nommé †.

It is this scene, and this very passage in the tragedy of Hippolytus which Aristophanes ridicules. We may judge by this stroke, whether, or not, the insinuations of Aristophanes were believed when he ridiculed Euripides. He every where paints him as a crafty man; perhaps he might be so in a certain degree: but it is not easy to believe upon the word of an inveterate enemy, that he was a dangerous man, much less that he was but an indifferent poet; nor was Athens to be imposed upon by these comic parodies.

* Olympus was an ancient player upon the flute, who was, the fable says, a disciple of Marsyas. The poet here burlesques some well-known air, and in general the tragic

poets, who often made their Chorusses weep to music.

† Racine in imitation of Euripides.

The important words, which neither of these orators durst utter, as Phædra durst not name Hippolytus, are: *Let us take refuge among the Lacedæmonians.* At length, they both speak them, yet without seeming to speak them, by playing upon the words, and rendering the sense doubtful. This flight to the enemy was a fatal resource, to which the Athenians often reduced their most illustrious citizens, through dread of the Ostracism, or something worse. Without reckoning Miltiades, Themistocles, and many others, who were driven to this extremity, Alcibiades, when he was upon his celebrated expedition against Sicily, finding he was recalled to answer to an accusation of impiety, thought proper to make use of this expedient. We shall have occasion to say more of this in the sequel.

Nicias, not caring to run this hazard, resolves to take sanctuary at the altars of the Gods. "What Gods, replies Demosthenes, do you believe in any?" "Yes, says Nicias, for they persecute me so unjustly, that I have reason to believe there are such Beings." This impious speech is introduced to create a suspicion of the impiety of these two citizens. Such accusations as these are to be met with frequently in the writings of Aristophanes. This answer is much the same with that made by Diogenes* to an apothecary, and by Theodorus the philosopher to another. Being asked if they believed in the Gods, "Yes, doubtless (said each of them to him who put the question to them), since I believe thou art their enemy." At length, Demosthenes and Nicias resolve to lay the whole matter before the audience, provided they will give them their applause.

This Demosthenes does by way of allegory, of which the following is the sense: "We belong to a severe and cruel master †, a great eater of beans, a man easily provoked to anger, a *Pycnitian* ‡ by birth, old, deaf, and peevish to the last degree. Some time ago he purchased a Paphlagonian slave, a leather-dresser by trade, a man full of artifice, intriguing, and a mere informer. This rogue, well knowing his old man's disposition, made it

* Diogenes Laertius, lib. vi. sec. 42. and lib. xi. sec. 103.

† He means the magistrates and the people. They used to chew beans that they might not sleep in assemblies. The warriors

eat garlick; Aristophanes, therefore, calls them all, eaters of garlick.

‡ From the term *Pnyx*, the place where assemblies of the people were held.

" his

" his study to soothe and flatter him, and to seduce him by his artful
 " insinuations. People of Athens, said he to him, after having heard
 " causes so long, take some repose, eat, drink, and accept what is
 " given at assemblies* : Will any of you come and sup with me?
 " And such other impertinences. By methods, like these, he has
 " insinuated himself into the old man's favour, and pillages us all
 " unmercifully. As for example, he has choused me out of my
 " Pylian cake†; he has always a leathern whip in his hand‡
 " to lash orators with, and hinder their access to the old man, who
 " dotes and pronounces oracles. Then this Paphlagonian besets
 " him continually, slanders us, threatens us, and forces us to give
 " him presents, crying, remember how I treated Hylas! If you
 " are not liberal, you shall die this very day. What can we do?
 " There is a necessity for giving him something."

After this speech, Demosthenes turns to Nicias, and asks him, what they shall do in this extremity? " Let us make our escape," says Nicias. " How can we do that, replies Demosthenes, the Paphlagonian will discover our intention; he has an eye to every thing; he has one foot on Pylos, and the other at the bar;"

*|| Ses deux mains sont au país d'Etolie
 Et son esprit est en la Clopidie.*

(Meaning that he thinks of nothing but robbery). " We must die then, says Nicias; but let us at least die like brave men." " How? resumes Demosthenes." " Let us drink bull's blood," replies Nicias; can we desire a fate more glorious than that of Themistocles? It was the popular report that Themistocles had poisoned himself with bull's blood. Demosthenes owns, that he had rather drink some wine, that he may be enabled to consider better what resolution they shall take. This orator certainly loved drinking, since the poet has a stroke at him on this occasion.

* The sum given was three oboles, or half a drachma. We shall often have occasion to mention this custom. Cleon ordained that three oboles instead of two should be given to each of the six thousand judges. The triobole was equal in value to five pence of our money.

† In allusion to the victory of Pylos; all the honour of which was given to Cleon, though it was due only to Demosthenes.

‡ Alluding to the trade of Cleon's father.

|| Amyot's translation of Plutarch.

Here he extolls highly the great efficacy of wine in those nice conjunctures where life is in danger, and he sends Nicias in haste for a bottle.

Nicias returns instantly with what he was sent to fetch, declaring with great joy, that he found the Paphlagonian lying upon some leather in a drunken sleep, after having been gorged with confiscation. This leather is perpetually recurring, in order to mortify Cleon on account of the meanness of his birth. Demosthenes, like a true slave, drinks greedily, and the first counsel Bacchus gives him, is to prevail upon Nicias to steal the oracles which are in the hands of the Paphlagonian. Nicias steals them, and they read them upon the stage. The oracle declares, "that first a trader
" in linen shall govern the state (here he means Eucrates*); then
" a trader in sheep (that was Lyficles); he shall be succeeded by
" one still meaner, his successor shall be the leather-seller, the
" Paphlagonian, a quarrelsome fellow, voracious, mercenary, with
" a most horrible voice, in a word, Cleon. For it is written in
" the fates, that all traders shall succeed each other. But who
" is to supplant this leather-dresser, by whom the butcher was sup-
" planted?" Demosthenes still reading says, that he shall be succeeded by a seller of baked meat and puddings: it was not possible to throw out more severe sarcasms against such a republic as Athens.

Nicias and his friend are impatient to find out the happy deliverer foretold by the oracle, and such a man in every respect offers himself to their view. This man is called Agoracritus †, and him the two friends implore to save the republic. It is supposed, that under the character of this man Hyperbolus was represented, a person of very mean birth, who has been already mentioned. This fiction, low as it appears to us, was on that very account but the more bitter against the Athenians, who sometimes raised such contemptible wretches to the highest offices in the state.

" Oh fortunate man! cry out the two orators at the sight of
" Agoracritus, you are nothing to-day, and to-morrow you shall
" be every thing ‡." The jest is, that this clown, to whom they

* Eucrates, Lyficles, and Cleon were successively questors, or treasurers.

† He was a seller of baked meat, and carried his shop about with him.

‡ There is a good deal of humour in these words, because they were strictly true in such a capricious state as Athens was.

address themselves in this manner, appears with a table spread with meat ready dressed, and that, instead of talking to him about what he has to sell, they accost him with the utmost reverence, calling him the head and tutelary angel of the commonwealth. He, as much surprised as the faggot-maker in Moliere, who is made a physician in spite of himself, looks eagerly first at one, then at the other. "Dost thou see this numerous people?" continues Demosthenes, thou shalt be the master of them all, and sovereign arbitrator in Athens. Thou shalt insult, nay, imprison the generals of the army. Get upon thy table, and behold these islands, these ports, these vessels, these markets: cast one eye to the right upon Caria, and another to the left upon Chalcedon, thou shalt sell all this, the oracle has declared it."

Agoracritus, astonished at the honours which are paid him, cannot conceive it possible, that from being so poor and mean, he shall become so great a man. "Thy meanness, reply they, is the very cause of thy exaltation." In vain he tells them, that he can scarcely read, and that in every respect he is utterly unworthy of so great an honour. They persuade him, that his ignorance and mean birth are the very qualities now required in one who is to be placed at the head of the state. They read to him the enigmatical and burlesque oracle, relating to himself, namely, that the Paphlagonian Kite, that is the robber Cleon, shall be vanquished by the Dragon, that is the hog's pudding, or rather the maker of hog's puddings.

Agoracritus can with difficulty recover from his amazement, so little does he think himself capable of governing the state. "Poor man, says Demosthenes to him, thou hast nothing to do, but to continue thy trade; it is the easiest thing imaginable: thou need'st only spread thy covering*, embroil every thing, allure the people to thee with the charms of thy cookery, and then thou wilt dupe them effectually. This is all that is required of thee. Besides, thou hast excellent qualities for the people, a strong voice, an impudent volubility of tongue, a malicious wit, and the market-place talent of wheedling. Take my word for it, thou art admirably well qualified for the government of the state." They exhort him to attack the Paphlagonian: a bold

* In allusion to his trade, compared with the methods made use of by Cleon in the government of the state.

enterprize! he is sensible of it, and asks who will second him? The rich? they reverence Cleon. The poor? they fear him. Demosthenes promises him the assistance of the knights, the sworn enemies of Cleon, the assistance of the audience, his own, and that of the Gods. He ludicrously exhorts him to fear nothing; "For, says he, it is not Cleon himself that thou wilt see, since no artist would venture to make a mask for him; but he is so well characterised, that thou wilt imagine thou really seest him." Nicias immediately gives notice by a dreadful cry, that the Paphlagonian is awake, and will soon appear. Certainly, the appearance of a villain upon the stage was never better prepared than in this comedy of Aristophanes from the first scene. Moliere has, perhaps, imitated him in the artifice he makes use of to prepare the spectators for his Tartuffe, who does not shew himself till he has been sketched out by as many strokes of the pencil as Cleon is. It cannot be denied at least, that Moliere has taken the idea, and many of the principal strokes of his *Medecin malgré lui* from Aristophanes; we see him in Agoracritus, who, in spite of himself, is made a great man in the state.

Cleon appears, and with a terrible voice reprimands the two slaves. It would seem as if he obscurely reproached them with having solicited the people of Chalcis to revolt, and it is certain, that they did revolt two years * afterwards. This suspicion, which Aristophanes throws upon Demosthenes and Nicias, is very shocking, and plainly proves the great liberty of the ancient comedy. Demosthenes, with loud cries, calls Agoracritus to his aid, but he had fled in great terror. The orator then implores the assistance of the knights, who enter as the Chorus. He forms them into a line as in order of battle †. The Chorus answer his cries, and the whole stage resounds with, "Strike, strike this enemy of the knights and the people, this rioter in depredations and rapines; and take care that he does not escape from you, for he is well acquainted with all the windings and by-paths of Eucrates." Here he, in a covert manner, reproaches them both with their meanness and low birth.

Cleon, perplexed with this new kind of sedition, calls the judges to his assistance: he gives them the title of *triobolaries*, on account

* In the eighth year of the war, under the archonship of Isarchus. Thucyd. lib. iv.

† Alluding to the expedition of Pylos,

where Demosthenes and Cleon jointly commanded.

of the gratuity he had caused to be augmented for them, and insinuates, that he supported them by his clamours and informations. But the judges do not appear. The Chorus give in their charge against Cleon, namely, that he devours the country. Cleon endeavours to appease the knights by flattering them: "What!" says he, is it thus that you treat a man, who was the first who proposed to have a monument erected in memory of your valour*." The Chorus are not to be imposed upon by this mean adulation, and threaten to prosecute him with more vigour than ever.

Agoracritus, who had hid himself, finding that there was nothing to fear, and that he should be well supported, comes up directly to Cleon, whose aspect had at first terrified him, and boasts that he will overcome this competitor, notwithstanding his voice of thunder. The Chorus consent to this combat, which is absolutely ludicrous, since the two rivals are to shew which will carry it by impudence and strength of lungs, the only talents which the knights acknowledge Cleon to be possessed of†. And indeed, Thucydides and Plutarch say, that he was a bad general, and a turbulent citizen. In this the historians do not differ from the poet.

Cleon, who perceives what sort of a competitor he has to deal with, begins by attempting to render him suspected of holding a correspondence with the enemies. An usual stratagem of his, in which he was very successful, and which shews him in his character of an informer. But here he finds an adversary worthy of himself; for Agoracritus accuses him of going to the Prytanium to breakfast, and coming from thence ready to burst. He even maliciously feigns, that he has all those vices with which he charges Cleon in allegorical terms, and all taken from Cleon's trade and his own. The combatants are ready to come to blows, they load each other with clamorous invectives. Cleon thunders, threatens, and cries out with the voice of a Stentor. Agoracritus replies, with kicks and cuffs, without yielding a step of ground: it was a particular way of fighting, in which they kicked each other's shins, till they tore off the flesh. But this mutual railing, though full of the keenest satire, is not proper for our

* This stroke seems to be levelled at the knights: however, it falls directly on Cleon.

† Thucyd. lib. iv. Plutarch, in the Life of Pericles, and elsewhere.

language and our manners. The affair of Pylos burlesqued makes all its value. One may form to one's self an idea of this humorous contest, when the two champions, one a maker of sausages, the other a general of an army, whose insolence is equal to his power, dispute for the superiority in impudence and strength of voice, to shew how well qualified they are for bearing the chief sway in the government of Athens. They reciprocally charge each other with the most atrocious crimes, and thus, according to the poet, prove the justice of their several claims. This is indeed a piece of satire of extraordinary boldness, and is so often repeated, that it is scarce possible to conceive how the Athenian state could hear and suffer it; but it was the policy of its governing members, to lay no restraint upon the people's tongues, and continue to act as they pleased. In the end, Agoracritus and Cleon summon each other to appear before the judges, and hasten to enter their accusations.

The interlude is a speech which the Chorus partly address to the audience. They declare the reason why the poet represented this comedy in his own name, a thing he never durst venture to do before. It was, say they, because he looks upon the comic art as a very thorny and dangerous study, and the fate of the most celebrated of his predecessors, such as Magnes, Cratinus, Crates, &c. fills him with terror. In this speech the ancient Athenian warriors are applauded as being braver and less interested than those of the present age. Lastly, the Chorus boast of their own great exploits, that is, the exploits of the second order of citizens. The whole is intermingled with invocations to the Gods, after the usual manner of Chorusses, and no less malicious than allegorical.

ACT II.

As soon as Agoracritus returns, he tells the Chorus, who are impatient to know what success Cleon has had in his dispute before the senate, that his adversary is shamefully defeated. He relates the whole affair very circumstantially, but in a burlesque manner. For in aping Cleon, he had attacked him with his own arms; "Cleon, says Agoracritus to the knights, began with
 "pouring out a torrent of calumnies against you, he treated you
 "all as conspirators against the state. The senate, imposed upon
 "by these villainous insinuations, began to arm their faces with
 "frowns; when I made an harangue, first invoking as deities,
 "impu-

"impudence, imposture, the market-place," &c. Here Agoracritus adds a low jest in imitation of the mean artifices to which Cleon used to have recourse. He says, that, after he had profoundly saluted one of the judges, from whom some involuntary noise had escaped, he began to cry out: "Great news, gentlemen! I bring you most joyful news." "Well, what is your news?" "Never since the beginning of this war have your favourite fish*, the fish you are so excessively fond of, been so cheap as they are now." This is a bitter satire upon the folly of the magistrates, who, instead of attending seriously to the wars in which the state was engaged, suffered themselves to be imposed upon by Cleon's arguments, who made them believe that every thing went well when delicacies for their tables could be purchased at a low price. "No sooner were these words uttered, continues Agoracritus, than you might have seen every face resume its former serenity. They applauded me, they crowned me, and I managed it so, that this so highly valued fish was actually sold at the lowest price. Cleon, who found himself supplanted, proposed to sacrifice a hecatomb for the good news he had received. But I quite confounded him by demanding two hecatombs, and even a sacrifice of a thousand he-goats†, if the *trichides*‡ were sold at an obole the hundred. These words roused the senate. In vain did Cleon attempt to argue, they would no longer hear him. A deputy from Lacedæmon came to demand audience, and mentioned peace. The senate would not suffer him to proceed. How! talk of peace when the most exquisite fish in the world is sold in Athens at the lowest prices! The assembly broke up, every one ran eagerly to buy fish. I, says Agoracritus, purchased herbs to make sauce for this so much coveted fish, and distributed them gratis among those who could not afford to buy any. They loaded me with praises, and I have absolutely gained over the whole senate by an obole of coriander."

* *Ἀπύνη*, a delicate fish, which the Athenians were very fond of.

† In allusion to a vow which the Athenians made before the battle of Marathon, which was to sacrifice to Diana as many he or she-goats as they should kill enemies. When they prepared to fulfil their vow,

there could not be found victims sufficient, so they were obliged to sacrifice five hundred every year, which continued till the time of Xenophon. Xenoph. lib. iii. de exp. Cyri, and Ælian. var. hist. lib. ii. c. 25.

‡ *Τριχίδες*, a sort of fish.

Such is the history of the senate's affection for Cleon, and of Cleon's method of managing the senate. Was it possible to produce a more cutting satire? In no other state but Athens would such a one have been suffered.

Cleon returns, foaming with rage; he throws out the bitterest invectives against Agoracritus, who, proud of his late victory, sustains this attack with a conceited air. The contest is renewed more vigorously before the knights, who take part with Agoracritus. After some allegorical abuse, Cleon, who had been worsted at the superior tribunal, threatens his competitor to drag him before that of the people. Agoracritus consents, saying, he will hollow still louder before them, well knowing that this was the only method of gaining a cause before the people.

CLEON.

But, thou art a paltry fellow, the people will not believe thee. As for me, I can turn them to what side I please.

AGORACRITUS.

Hear how he sports with the people, whom he boasts of being entirely in his power.

CLEON.

Because I know what dainties will please them best.

AGORACRITUS.

Yes, thou dost as nurses do, who eat their children's pap.

Cleon calls the old man who represents the people: "Come forth, says he, my beloved, come forth."

Agoracritus invites him in the like fawning way. The old man shews himself grumbling. Cleon bemoans himself for the hardships he suffers on account of his too great affection for him; but his competitor is not less lavish of his kind professions to the poor weak old man.

CLEON.

One proof of my great love for the people is my supplanting the general in the affair of Pylos, and driving away the Lacedæmonians.

AGORACRITUS.

And I shewed my affection to them by pilfering a mess of pottage which another person had made.

Agora-

Agoracritus, therefore, intreats the people to decide between their different pretensions, but provides that this cause shall not be disputed at the place where assemblies are usually held; "For," adds he, the good man is sensible enough when he is in his "own house; but at the assembly he is a mere infant."

The two rivals plead their cause before the old man. Cleon begins, and, by a ridiculous imprecation, endeavours to prove his great love for the people*. Agoracritus improves upon this artifice by an imprecation still more ridiculous. They now lay open their pretensions. Cleon alleges the many extortions and robberies he has committed upon particular persons in favour of the people. But Agoracritus says, that nothing was more easy than to do the like; and to shew how great Cleon's affection for the people was, "You Athenians, says he, who fought so valiantly at Marathon, and whose victories have so elated us, does he not suffer you "to sit upon a stone in the places where you are assembled!" Hereupon he gives the old man a cushion; and this complaisance gains upon him so much, that Agoracritus takes advantage of it to accuse Cleon of great cruelty towards the people during eight years†, when he saw them reduced to dwell in wretched hovels, and with insolently dismissing the Lacedæmonians, who humbly sued for peace, which was as necessary for the Athenians as for them. This negotiation, which is so well related in Thucydides (lib. iv.), the Lacedæmonians entered into, on account of their troops being blocked up in the isle of Sphacteria.

Cleon answers, that love for his country was his motive for treating the deputies as he did, and that he refused the offered peace upon the faith of certain oracles‡, which declared, that the people of Athens should give law to all Greece, and should

* He insinuates, that, next to Lyficles, and two courtesans, who probably belonged to Lyficles, he was the honestest of all the treasurers.

† Some time before the war began, the inhabitants of several boroughs in Attica came to Athens, where they were greatly frightened for habitations. Thucyd. lib. i. This great concourse of people, at length, occasioned a plague. This passage in Aristophanes, and several others where he men-

tions the Lenean feasts, the victory gained by two thousand foot and two hundred horse over the Corinthians, the rejoicings of Athens before the Athenians received those two checks at Megara and Delium, misfortunes which did not happen till the eighth year of the war; all this confirms the date of this comedy, pointed out in the Greek preface.

‡ Thucyd. lib. ix. Cleon is ridiculed here as in the former scenes, for deluding the people with pretended oracles.

receive five oboles * a man at every assembly. These in reality were the paltry arguments which the ambitious Cleon made use of to persuade the people to refuse peace, which they did to their misfortune. Agoracritus tells Cleon, that it was not the good of his country, but his own interest, that he consulted, when he refused peace: either that he might enrich himself during the war, and fish in troubled waters, or to prevent a prosecution for his crimes. Cleon endeavours to prove, that his services to the republic has been as great as those of Themistocles: this affords new matter for ridicule. At length, the old man, enraged to find he had been so long the dupe of Cleon, commands him to be silent. His rival begins his charge, and accuses him of embezzling the public money, and of a mercenary collusion with those persons who would have extirpated the Mityleniens. Here the poet touches upon a story which is related at length by Thucydides in the fourteenth book of his history. The people of Mitylene, a little state in the isle of Lesbos, having revolted a second time from the Athenians, Paches, the Athenian general, made himself master of the city, and sent the ringleaders of this rebellion prisoners to Athens. There it was deliberated what punishment should be inflicted upon that seditious city, and, at the instigation of Cleon, a decree was made by which not only the prisoners, but all the Mityleniens above the age of puberty, were condemned to death: the rest of the inhabitants, as well women as children, were condemned to slavery. The republic, after this first transport of rage had subsided, repented of so barbarous a decree; but Cleon pronounced an oration, which may be read in the history, to prevail upon the people to confirm it. This oration is fine and full of spirit. Diodorus answered it in favour of the Mityleniens; and when it was put to the vote, the greatest number were for pardoning them. The decree was cancelled, and a ship was instantly dispatched with a revocation of the cruel orders, which had been sent by another. Fortunately the last ship arrived as soon as the first, Mitylene was spared, and the Athenians were satisfied with putting those to death who had been principally concerned in the revolt. It is plain that Aristophanes means to insinuate, that Cleon received forty minos to plead against the Mityleniens, or that he was promised the spoils of those who had been condemned.

* Cleon was the first who gave three.

Cleon being now reduced to throw himself upon his defence, alleges in his favour the shields brought from Pylos, which he had taken from the enemy: and his adversary ridicules him upon the leather about each of those shields. He next declares, that he alone had prevented a dreadful conspiracy. He is told, that he imitated those fishermen who disturb the water in order to have a greater draught of fishes. Agoracritus maliciously asks him, whether, during the time that he amassed money by selling leather, he had ever given the people as much as would make a strap; and instantly he himself gives the old man shoes, and adds to this gift a cloak, repeating the same reproach to Cleon. Cleon offers the like present, and would cover the shoulders of the people, but the old man refuses the cloak Cleon presents him, telling him it smelled of leather. Agoracritus still turning every thing Cleon does into ridicule, throws him into a violent rage, at which he laughs, and the old man is so entirely gained over by Agoracritus, that he takes the ring from Cleon, which the questors always wore, in order to bestow it on Agoracritus. But he is greatly surprised to find that the ring, instead of bearing the usual mark, represents a bird of prey, with his bill open as if to pronounce an oration. "This is not my ring, says the old man, "who represents the people, this belongs to Cleonymus." He then gives another to Agoracritus, with the office of treasurer. Cleon, to support himself in that dignity, has recourse to his oracles; but his rival shuts his mouth by saying, that he has some of far greater consequence. However, as this is a new contrivance of Cleon's to regain the people's favour, he is allowed to read his oracles, after suffering some bitter raillery from the Chorus. Accordingly, Cleon produces these oracles, and Agoracritus opposes them with some of his; and this makes the subject of the third act.

A C T III.

This mutual opposition of oracles, that is, of great promises with which they endeavour to allure the people, is treated with the same kind of humour as all that has hitherto passed between the two rivals, but in a manner still more enigmatical. Cleon shews some mysterious writings, adding, that he has a whole box full besides. Oracles for deceiving Athens he easily procures. Agoracritus goes beyond him, and says, that he has a house full of such
papers.

papers. Cleon's first oracle is a command *to keep the barking dog*. The dog is himself. Agoracritus produces another quite contrary, *That Cerberus who feasts upon the blood of the people*. Cleon reads a second, in which he compares himself to *a lion whom it is necessary to preserve*. But he is told, that this very oracle, when rightly explained, means, *that the lion must be imprisoned and put into the pillory* *. They continue reading several other oracles, all conceived in the same obscure terms, but not so difficult to be understood by the Athenians, as by us. This shews, that the people suffered themselves to be imposed upon by superstitious sentences, which those persons, who sought to govern the state, knew how to make advantage of. Cleon, in one of his oracles, has an allusion to that well known orse of Themistocles; that is, to the *wooden walls* which Apollo advised the Athenians to build, and by which Themistocles understood ships to be meant, and therefore prevailed upon the Athenians to fight the naval battle of Salamina.

As my design here is only to give an idea of the ancient comedy, and not to enter into learned disquisitions, which would lead us far from the principal end of this work, I shall not attempt the difficult task of explaining several other humorous oracles, the allusions of which are less easy to discover, and are less capable of giving amusement.

Cleon, having had no success with his oracles, has recourse to another artifice, which is to promise the people a distribution of corn. But the people refuse this largess from such a minister as he is, whom, they say, they have often been deceived by, as well as by Theophanes. Cleon adds, that he is ready to give the old man a feast. Agoracritus makes an offer of the same kind, but with more magnificence; so that the people, represented by the old man, allured by these largesses and entertainments, accept the proposal, determined to be wholly on the side of him who regales them best. This is shewn in the following act: for the two candidates go out to prepare the feast; and, during this interval, the knights observe to the old man, that it is he who is in reality the sovereign of Athens, since all the great men strive who shall best make their court to him; but that, after all, he does not know how to use his power, for those great men impose upon him as

* In a block with five holes in it, *πενταπύργου ξύλον*. Schol.

they

they please, by laying the grossest snares for him. The old man, who represents the people, replies, that he takes great pleasure in enriching the rogues who flatter him, that he may afterwards force them to refund their booty.

ACT IV.

The two competitors, determined to conciliate the old man's affections at any price, return each with a table loaded with dishes of meat. Their entry is humorous enough; for feigning, that they are in the lists ready to start at the first signal, they wait for one from the old man in order to begin. Cleon presents him a chair, and Agoracritus a table, "Eat this cake, says the former, "I made it at Pylos." "Take this crust, says the other, Ceres "baked it on purpose for you." Both of them alternately offer him dishes, in which there is some allusion to the affairs of the republic, and the latter always improves upon the former. But Agoracritus, who had hitherto offered the best, finds himself at a great loss when his rival presents the people with a pickled hare, which was their favourite dish: he has nothing like this to offer, and therefore makes use of a cunning artifice, in imitation of Cleon's conduct with regard to the affair of Pylos. He pretends, that some ambassadors are arrived loaded with money. "Where "are they?" cries Cleon eagerly. Agoracritus, while he is looking for them, takes that opportunity to supplant him, and presents the people with that exquisite dish which his competitor had designed for them. The allusion is plain enough, and Aristophanes was persuaded it would be perfectly well understood. Cleon now confesses, that, in point of impudence, his adversary has outdone him.

Agoracritus, to overwhelm his rival with despair by one effort of genius, proposes to the old man, to search their several baskets. Agoracritus's is found quite empty; he has given the people all; but the Paphlagonian's is still full; he had taken out but a very small part of the provisions it contained to regale the people with. "Thus, says Agoracritus, he always treats you. He gives you a "scanty pittance, and reserves great quantities for himself." Hereupon the people resolve to take from Cleon the crown with which he is adorned, to bestow it upon their new favourite. But Cleon, with a tremendous voice, declares that this cannot be done, because he has received an oracle from Delphos, which plainly points out all the qualities of that person by whom he is to be supplanted.

supplanted. That person is myself, replies Agoracritus, I possess all requisite qualities to be chief man in the state. Cleon interrogates him, much in the same manner as Oedipus questions Laius the shepherd in Sophocles's tragedy *, and at each answer he by degrees discovers his successor in this new rival. His questions and Agoracritus's answers are singular enough, for they all tend to shew that Agoracritus is a despicable wretch, one who sells baked meat, a robber, an impostor, a liar, and a professed informer, consequently, that he is the true and worthy successor of Cleon. Cleon acknowledges, that he is the person meant by the oracle, and still imitating Oedipus, cries out: "Alas! the oracle is accomplished: hide the wretched Cleon in impenetrable darkness. Adieu, my dear crown, with grief I quit thee, another shall wear thee, who, if he be not a greater robber than I am, yet, at least, he shall be a more fortunate one." These last verses are a parody of one of the most beautiful passages in the *Alcestes* † of Euripides. There are likewise parodies of several passages in the plays of that poet which are not come down to us; and although the scholiasts do not take notice of that of the *Oedipus* of Sophocles; yet it is too plain not to be perceived: and we may conclude from it, that Euripides is not the only one of the three tragic poets whom Aristophanes has ridiculed.

The new treasurer is declared conqueror, and saluted as such. They deliver the Paphlagonian into his hands, to be disposed of as he pleases. Agoracritus promises the people, who recommend themselves to him, a sincere repentance, and particular solicitude for the *city of fools* ‡; for so he styles Athens by a metaphorical term ||. While the conqueror retires with the people, the Chorus perform its office in comedy, which is slandering, or rather abusing with the utmost virulence the public or particular persons.

A C T V.

Agoracritus returns hastily, but with an air of triumph. He commands the Chorus to keep silence, as if he had great news to acquaint them with. They are silent accordingly. "I have new-

* This is a parody of one of the finest scenes of Sophocles.

† See *Alcestes*, part. i. vol. iii.

‡ Aristophanes says here, and elsewhere,

that the people have always their mouths open like fools.

|| *Χαίρω, bisco.*

" cast

“ cast the people, says he to them, I restore to you the old man, “ no longer weak and wicked, but wise, generous, and just. He “ dwells in the ancient, the true Athens, and is become such as “ he was formerly in the times of Miltiades and Aristides.” The doors are thrown open, the man, who represents the people, appears amidst the acclamations of the Chorus. He is restored to youth, and thanks Agoracritus for the benefit he has lately conferred on him; and, as if he had lost all remembrance of what had happened to him in the time of Cleon, he desires to be informed of all. Agoracritus relates, without any palliation, part of those follies which had escaped the old man as in a delirium; as for example, his giving himself up to deceivers, who flattered him in order to grow rich by pillaging him, and the like. The old man, that is, the people, blushes for his past errors; but the new questor imputes them not so much to him, as to those persons by whom he was imposed upon. However, he asks him several questions concerning the conduct he intends to follow for the time to come. “ That of a wise man,” replies the representative of the people. There is a great deal of satire in this passage, as well as in the whole scene; and to make the satire the more bitter, and comic in the highest degree, Agoracritus produces two women, whom he calls the ancient alliances of Athens with Lacedæmon, saying, that Cleon had kept them prisoners in his house, but he had delivered them, and now resigned them to the people, since they were become wise. “ But what shall we do (says the “ representative of the people) with that rogue, that Paphlagonian, who has done so much harm?” Agoracritus can think of no greater punishment for him than to change conditions with him, and to allow him to take up the trade which he had laid down upon taking his place in the state.

These are the most curious passages in this piece, the turn and conduct of which shew us the extravagant humour, the acrimony, and boldness of the comic poets of Greece, as likewise the genius of the spectators, who were pleased with severe truths, and keen invective, though pointed at themselves.

THE
C L O U D S :

A

COMEDY OF ARISTOPHANES.

This Play was first acted under the archon Isarchus, in the ninth year of the Peloponnesian war, the first of the 89th Olympiad, at the Dionysial feasts. It was acted a second time with some alterations under the archon Aminias, in the second year of the same Olympiad; and the following year, under the archonship of Arceus, it was again revised a third time, but not represented.

THERE is scarce any person who has not heard at least of this comedy, which is the most celebrated of all that were written by Aristophanes. The great Socrates, who is most cruelly calumniated in it, has made it a monument to all posterity, and as Despreaux says :

*Aux accès insolens d'une bouffonne joye
La sagesse, l'esprit, l'honneur furent en proye.
On vit par le public un poëte avoué
S'enrichir aux dépens du mérite joué :
Et Socrate par lui dans un Cœur de Nuées,
D'un vil amas de peuple attirer les buées*.*

The more interesting this comedy is, the more necessary it is, in my opinion, to fix the date of it exactly, in order to judge, whether it be true that Socrates fell a victim to the malicious satire that is here levelled against him. The silence of Plato,

* Despreaux, Art. poet. ch. iii.

Thucydides;

Thucydides, Aristotle, in a word, of all the cotemporary writers, upon an article of such importance, has always seemed to me very surprising, and renders a little doubtful the opinion of those who really believe, that this comedy was the cause of Socrates's death. Ælian, it is true, says so in plain terms*; but we should remember, that Ælian lived in the time of the emperor Antoninus the Good, and he is the first who has asserted this fact, which others, as Eunapius and some scholiasts, have taken upon his authority. However, what he says upon this subject merits consideration. I shall, therefore, give the reader the whole chapter.

“ Anytus and his party industriously sought out the means of
 “ ruining Socrates, for reasons which we have related in another
 “ place; but they were afraid of the Athenians: they were doubt-
 “ ful, in what manner the people would receive an accusation
 “ against a man, who, on many accounts, had acquired great
 “ credit in the state, and particularly because he exposed the so-
 “ phists, who neither knew nor taught any thing that was valuable.
 “ They began by sounding those men, concerning the design they
 “ had formed of accusing Socrates; for they judged it unsafe to
 “ precipitate the matter, not only for the reasons I have men-
 “ tioned, but for fear that the friends and disciples of Socrates
 “ should turn the resentment of the judges upon the accusers of
 “ a man who could be reproached with no crime, and who was
 “ in reality the ornament of his age. The scheme they hit upon
 “ was, to go to Aristophanes, a writer of comedies, a scoffer by
 “ profession, a downright buffoon, and who gloried in being so:
 “ him they gained over, and persuaded him to traduce Socrates,
 “ by ridiculing him upon the stage for those crimes which they
 “ falsely charged upon him, such as seducing the people by the
 “ power of his eloquence, which could make them believe white to
 “ be black, and to pervert right reason, a man whose opinions were
 “ new and dangerous, who sought to introduce the worship
 “ of strange dæmons, instead of the Gods, whom he despised,
 “ and one who was very capable of insinuating his erroneous opi-
 “ nions into all that approached him. Aristophanes eagerly seized
 “ this subject, gave it all the poignancy of humour and harmony
 “ of verse, and was not ashamed to make the best of Greeks the
 “ object of his ridicule. It was not a Cleon against whom he

* Ælian, var. hist. ch. xiii.

“ was to point his satire, the Lacedæmonians, or the Thebans ;
 “ but a wise and virtuous man, beloved by the gods, and by Apollo *
 “ in particular. Socrates thus exhibited on the stage, at first strangely
 “ surprised the Athenians who expected nothing less : but, be-
 “ cause they were naturally ever ready to suspect extraordinary and
 “ distinguished persons, whether for the management of public
 “ affairs, or for knowledge and regularity of life, this comedy of
 “ the *Clouds* began to please them, and to such a degree, that they
 “ gave the poet more applause for this piece than for any other
 “ which had ever been exhibited to them. They proclaimed him
 “ victor †, and obliged the judges appointed to decide between the
 “ pretensions of the rival poets, to put the name of Aristophanes
 “ before all the others. Such was the success of this comedy !

“ As for Socrates, he seldom went to the theatre but when
 “ Euripides contended for the prize of poetry, and exhibited a new
 “ tragedy, and then he never failed to be there. He was likewise
 “ present at the mock-fights on the Pyreus, as he loved that tragic
 “ poet for his wisdom, and for the beauty of his pieces, which re-
 “ commended the practice of virtue. However, Alcibiades ‡ and
 “ Critias || sometimes forced him to be present at the representation
 “ of a comedy ; but, instead of taking any pleasure in that kind of
 “ diversion, he always expressed great contempt for the comic
 “ poets |||. He who was a philosopher, and a good man, could not
 “ but dislike those persons who made it their profession to ridi-
 “ cule and calumniate all persons indiscriminately. These were
 “ the secret causes of that resentment which gave rise to the
 “ comedy of the *Clouds*, without reckoning the importunity of
 “ Anytus and Melitus. Nor is it improbable §, that Aristo-
 “ phanes suffered himself to be corrupted with bribes upon this

* Apollo at Delphos had, by an oracle, declared him to be the wisest of men. Socrates himself interpreted it to the Athenians with equal wit and modesty, by telling them, they believed they knew every thing, and knew nothing, whereas he knew nothing, and believed he knew nothing.

† The people, together with the judges, were called to decide the prize.

‡ The son of Clinias.

|| The son of Calischrus.

||| These words are very remarkable, as

being conformable to what the ancients have said on this circumstance, who do not mention the part Anytus had in suggesting the subject of this piece. The contempt Socrates expressed for Aristophanes was, according to all appearances, the true motive which induced the poet to take this revenge upon the philosopher.

§ Ælian does not assert this, to be a fact, he only gives it as his opinion that it is probable.

“ occasion ;

“ occasion; for who that considers the extreme eagerness of several
 “ of the Athenians to calumniate Socrates, and to bring him be-
 “ fore their tribunals on heavy accusations, and recollects that
 “ the poet was poor, and very malicious, would think it unlikely
 “ that he should have taken money for being concerned in this
 “ iniquitous affair?

“ However, the comedy of the *Clouds* procured its author
 “ great fame; and the saying of Cratinus was never so well proved
 “ as upon this occasion: The theatre, says he, corrupts our man-
 “ ners *. This comedy being represented during the celebration
 “ of the Dionysial feasts, a great number of strangers, then at Athens,
 “ resorted to the theatre; and while the unhappy Socrates was thus
 “ ridiculed, his name so often repeated, and his figure imitated
 “ exactly by the makers of masks, they, who knew not who was
 “ meant, made a great noise in the assembly, asking continually,
 “ who is this Socrates? He who was present, having come thither
 “ on purpose, because he knew he was ridiculed in this piece,
 “ and had seated himself in a place where he might be seen by
 “ the whole audience, hearing the clamour, resolved to free the
 “ strangers from their perplexity, and therefore rose from his seat,
 “ and continued standing during the whole representation; so great
 “ contempt did he shew for this satire, and for the whole Athenian
 “ audience who approved it.”

Having given Ælian's account of this transaction, I shall observe to the reader, that two of the five expositions or prefaces to this comedy, namely the second and the fifth, relate it in the same manner, but doubtless upon his authority. Now there is one certain circumstance upon which we may depend, and that is, that there was an interval of two and twenty, or three and twenty years at least between the first representation of this comedy, and the murder of Socrates; from whence it follows (according to Mr. Paulmier) that the story related by Ælian and by his copyists is a mere fable, and that Aristophanes was no more an accomplice in the death of Socrates, than of Eupolis, whom he rallied as bitterly as Socrates, or than Crates †, and Diphilus, both comic

* Makes them sick.

† Crates, an Athenian, was at first an actor in the comedies of Cratinus, and afterwards a writer of the old comedy; he

was, it is said, the first who introduced drunken persons upon the stage. Diphilus, the comic poet, was a cotemporary of Menander's, and wrote in the same taste.

poets,

poets, were authors of the deaths of Hippon and Beda, two philosophers, who, like all others, were given up to the censure and licentiousness of the ancient comedy, the declared foe of philosophy and of all its professors. This conclusion may be naturally drawn from the scholiasts, from the ancient writers of Greek prefaces, and from that passage of Ælian, which we have just quoted, wherein he mentions Aristophanes's personal enmity to Socrates and Euripides; and by others we are told, that in general the comic poets and philosophers were great enemies to each other, and it was to this mutual hatred that the comedy of the *Clouds* owed its birth. I will not pretend to carry this argument as far as Mr. Paulmier has done; but by fixing the time when the comedy of the *Clouds* was acted, and that when Socrates was put to death, we may conclude, that Ælian is perhaps in the right, when he says, that Aristophanes did not intend to procure the death of Socrates, nor was suborned by Anytus, to lay the foundation of so heavy a charge against him; yet was he no less criminal as well as Eupolis, in having been the remote cause of that unjust prosecution carried on by the Athenians against the most virtuous pagan that ever lived. It is certain that Socrates was condemned for those very crimes, which Aristophanes had falsely attributed to him in his comedy of the *Clouds*; however, that did not happen till many years after the poet had endeavoured to render him odious to all Greece in this play, which is said to be the most finished of all his pieces. But let us proceed to the proofs, which I shall collect from Aristophanes himself, who, with respect to the date of his comedy, ought to be credited rather than Ælian. This method of interpreting an author by his own works, is much surer than the notes of commentators.

In the first place it is certain, that we have the comedy, called the *Clouds*, written in a first, second, and perhaps in a third manner; that is, retouched, though not altered, in the fundamental plan. It is no less certain, that this incomparable piece, in which three different manners are recognized, was acted and retouched in the three first years of the 89th Olympiad; for, without paying any regard to the ancient commentators*, or laying any stress upon some verses quoted by Atheneus, either out of the first or

* See the fourth ancient argument, and others.

second *Clouds*; verses, which may be found in the comedy before us *; Aristophanes, in one passage, speaks of Cleon as being still alive †, and in another he mentions the same Cleon as dead ‡, as we shall find in the examination of the piece. Now, Cleon died || in the tenth year of the Peloponesian war, in the archonship of Aminias, the second year of the 89th Olympiad; therefore, the second *Clouds* could not have been acted before that year, and the first in the former. In the *Wasps*, which was acted that same year, during the archonship of Aminias, Aristophanes complains that his competitors had unjustly obtained the prize, when the year before he exhibited his comedy of the *Clouds* for the first time, that is, the first year of the 89th Olympiad. He makes much the same complaint to the audience in his prologue to the second *Clouds*; therefore, the first and the second comedy were represented in the first, the second, or at least in the third year of the 89th Olympiad. To this proof, if we add the authority of the Greek prefaces, the difficulty will vanish, and it will be found, that Aristophanes and his commentators agree, at least with regard to the time of this representation, which is what we are chiefly concerned to fix.

On the other hand, Socrates was seventy years old when he was accused by Anytus and Melitus, and afterwards condemned to drink poison, which happened under the archon Laches, in the first year of the 95th Olympiad §, that is, twenty-three years after the death of Cleon. The date of Socrates's death, therefore, being certain, and that of the comedy of the *Clouds* no less so, we find there is an interval of twenty-three years between that comedy and his death. We must conclude with Mr. Paulmier, that Ælian, in general, ought to be rejected with respect to the

* Atheneus, lib. iv. quotes five verses in the first *Clouds*, which are to be found in this comedy, v. 198. he also quotes a passage in the second *Clouds*, which is in this piece, v. 559. therefore, we have the same comedy revised, and acted twice.

† Verse 590.

‡ Verse 549. Here he alleges the piece of Eupolis, called *Marica*, where Cleon is supposed to be dead.

|| Thucyd. and Diodor.

§ Diog. Euseb. There are some writers who assert that Socrates was only sixty years old, when he was accused by Anytus, and thus advance his death ten years; so that, according to them, Socrates was murdered thirteen years after the death of Cleon: but I cannot help observing, that the date which fixes the death of Socrates at the age of seventy years is the most certain, and most generally received.

account he gives; though not entirely: for, after all, he agrees with others concerning the great hatred of the comic poets to the philosophers, and particularly to Socrates, and makes that hatred to be the principal cause of the writing this satire. He adds indeed, that the poet undertook it at the instigation of Anytus and Melitus, in which he may be mistaken; but this circumstance of his narration is faulty on account of his not having mentioned the long interval there was between the representation of the *Clouds*, and the sentence against Socrates. Let us conclude, that Aristophanes railed at Socrates from the same motive that he railed at Cleon, namely, a personal resentment against him, and probably uninfluenced by Anytus. Let us add, that, although his comedy did not give the last blow to Socrates, yet it raised prejudices against him, since those humorous accusations became very serious ones, which at length, by means of Anytus and his party, occasioned the death of the wisest and most virtuous of the Greeks. There is also another error in Ælian's account of this affair, where he speaks of the *Clouds* as a comedy which was received with great applause; and Aristophanes, who in this case ought surely to be believed, complains twice of its hard reception, and of the great injustice of the judges in preferring the comedies of Cratinus and Amipsias to this. It is certain, that Aristophanes speaks very highly of this play of his, and perhaps his boasting so much was the cause of its being better received, when it was next acted; but this is only a conjecture which does not entirely clear Ælian of misrepresenting this fact. It appeared to me necessary to enter into this detail, as well as Paulmier and Spanheim; and yet more, to compare Aristophanes with himself, in order to know what judgment we ought to form of that opinion, which generally prevails, that Aristophanes, upon this occasion, influenced the captious minds of the Athenians as he pleased, and prevailed upon them to put Socrates instantly to death; but this neither was nor could be the case; the Athenians, although distrustful and jealous of extraordinary merit of every kind, yet certainly never acted with such precipitation in matters of that consequence, merely upon the suggestions of their orators and comic poets. They laughed at their humorous sallies, and all sorts of liberties were allowed to eloquence and satire; but we do not find that Pericles, Cleon, Lamachus, Alcibiades, and many other persons of the first dignity in the state,

dignity in the state, who were certainly of more consequence in the state than Socrates a poor philosopher, were victims to the bitter railleries and horrid accusations of Aristophanes, who tells us in more than one passage of his works, that his competitors satirised their fellow-citizens with as much virulence as himself, and with equal severity.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Strepsiades, a rich man, but in debt; Phidippides, a young spendthrift, son to Strepsiades; their servant; Socrates, and his servant; a Chorus of *Clouds*; Pafias and Amunias, two Usurers; Chærephon, a friend of Socrates. The scene is near the house of Socrates at Athens.

A C T. I.

Strepsiades is represented in a bed, his son being in another at a little distance. The old man tosses about from side to side, restless and impatient for the morning. Full of inquietude about the debts which the extravagance of his wife and son had forced him to contract, he mutters to himself for some time, and then wakens his servant, asks for a light, and, jumping out of bed, begins in a soliloquy to talk of his affairs: "Twelve minas to Pafias! "How did I contract this debt? Oh! for that fine horse which "I purchased for my extravagant son. — Item, three minas to "Amunias for mending a chariot*." One would imagine that Aristophanes, both here and elsewhere, strikes at Amunias, who was archon in the second year of the 89th Olympiad; but that he made a slight alteration in his name, because the law forbade the ridiculing the first magistrate upon the stage. However that may be, it is certain that Aristophanes often reflects upon Amunias.

Strepsiades, who had spent the greater part of his life in the country†, repents his having quitted his estate, and rural employments, to marry a woman of the race of Megacles and Alcmaeon ‡,

* Moliere has imitated this soliloquy in the first scene of his *Malade imaginaire*, where Argante alone settles his accounts as if his physician and apothecary were present.

† As in *le Mari confondu*, a comedy of Moliere's.

‡ One of the most illustrious families in Athens.

a woman profuse in her expences, nice, whimsical, and a coquet, who has brought him a son with the same dispositions. It must be observed, that, during this soliloquy, Phidippides, the son of this citizen, is heard talking in his sleep of horses, and chariot races*, which renders the soliloquy of the father more humorous, since it is his son's fondness for that expensive diversion which occasions all his affliction.

After having thus given the character of his son, he goes to his bedside to waken him, but gently and with great precaution, for he loves him, notwithstanding his bad conduct. He endeavours to prevail upon him to engage in a scheme, which he has just thought of, which is, to go to a neighbouring house, pointing it out to him, where he will find persons, who prove that the sky is an oven, and that men are coals; a ridiculous parody upon the comparisons made use of by Socrates, in his discourses; for it is the house of Socrates that he means. The son treats these philosophers, namely, the master and Chærephon his disciple, as visionaries, fools, and calls them bare-feet†; but the father thinks very differently of them. This shews that the friends and enemies of the philosophers of Athens were equally extravagant in their applauses and censures. The scene between the father and son on this subject, paints in the most lively colours a fond father, and a son spoiled by indulgence. Menander and Terence have not since produced any thing better of the same kind. Strepsiades not being able to persuade Phidippides to make himself a disciple of Socrates, in order to learn the art of paying his debts with jests, and of proving that day is night, thinks the secret of too great importance to be neglected, and therefore, takes a resolution to attend this school himself, fully persuaded, that he shall be able to deal with his creditors, and pay them only with words.

Accordingly he knocks at Socrates's door, which is opened by his servant, who comes out hastily with an angry and dejected air, much like the servant of Euripides in the *Acharnenses*, or Agathon's in the *Feasts of Ceres*; for Aristophanes is sometimes guilty of repetitions, and the advantage, which I flatter myself my

* In Athens a man had need to be very rich who allowed himself these expensive diversions. Republicans are naturally frugal, and the Athenians could not with a

greater misfortune to their enemies than to keep horses.

† They wore no shoes.

readers will reap by my analysing all the comedies of the Athenian poet, is, that they will become acquainted with his turn of wit, and be able to compare him with himself; an advantage they will not find in reading those comedies of his, which some of our writers have been contented with barely rendering in French*.

The servant of Socrates is a philosopher in imitation of his master, as the servants of Euripides and Agathon are poets. These three scenes of three several comedies have a strong resemblance as well as some others, which will be mentioned. This great genius curses the rustic ignorance of Strepsiades, who, by knocking so loud at the door, had been the cause of his losing the connection of a noble and beautiful observation. These are the strokes of a masterly hand, which in a single expression characterises the ridiculous persons who are soon to be exhibited. Strepsiades, with great humility, makes an apology for what he had done, and modestly asks him, what it was upon which his thoughts were employed when he so unfortunately interrupted him.

SERVANT.

It is not lawful to reveal these mysteries to such as are not initiated in our school.

STREPSIADES.

Speak freely, for I am come to be a disciple of thy master's.

SERVANT.

Then I will satisfy thee: but remember that these are great mysteries. Socrates asked Chærephon the other day, how many of her own feet a flea could leap; for it must be observed, that a flea had bit Chærephon's eyebrow, and leaped from thence upon the head of Socrates.

STREPSIADES.

How could he measure this?

* Madame Dacier has translated *Plutus*, and the *Clouds*, and Mr. Boivin the *Birds*. I am not ashamed to profit by their skill, nor to confess that I do so, yet without confin-

ing myself to their manner of translating, and their sentiments, which I shall examine and compare with the original.

SERVANT.

Nothing can be imagined more ingenious than his contrivance to settle this matter. He dipped both the insect's feet into melted wax, which, when it was grown cold, formed shoes, which he took off, and with those he measured the space exactly.

STREPSIADES.

Oh Jupiter! what subtilty of wit!

SERVANT.

What wouldst thou say then, if thou shouldst hear another speculation of his?

STREPSIADES.

What is it? I beg thee tell me.

Here the servant relates another ridiculous experiment of the same kind. It was to discover, whether the buzzing noise made by a gnat in flying proceeded from its mouth or its tail, and gives a physical explication of their intestine which is filled with wind *. The servant also mentions another ludicrous circumstance relating to Socrates, who as he was gazing on the moon with his mouth open, an insect let fall its ordure into it. But the most satyrical picture of all is this, in which he represents his master dexterously stealing a cloak. "Last night, says he, we had no supper, and "did not know how to procure any."

STREPSIADES.

Faith, that was shocking! how did he get out of this difficulty?

SERVANT.

He strewed some dust upon a table, and while he was amusing his auditors with a compass in one hand, he with the other dexterously took one of their cloaks off a hook with a piece of crooked iron.

STREPSIADES.

By my faith, Thales himself never performed such a trick. Open the door instantly; suffer me to enter this school of wif-

* It is as if they had ridiculed the physical disquisitions in our days.

dom : shew me Socrates, I die with impatience to be an adept in these sciences. Open the door, I beg thee. (*The door is opened.*) Oh Hercules ! what strange animals have we here ?

SERVANT.

Why art thou so surpris'd ? What do they resemble thinkst thou ?

STREPSIADES.

They resemble the prisoners we took at Pylos* : why are their eyes fixed so intently on the earth ?

SERVANT.

They are prying into its bowels:

STREPSIADES.

What ! are they looking for leeks there ? &c.

The servant being disposed to play the man of genius and learning, Strepsiades asks him several questions concerning the different instruments he sees near them, such as globes, spheres, and the like.

STREPSIADES.

What is that I see there ?

SERVANT.

That is astronomy in person †.

STREPSIADES.

And that ?

SERVANT.

Geometry.

STREPSIADES.

Of what use is that machine ?

* The poet speaks here of the Lacedæmonians taken in the island Sphacteria by Demosthenes and Cleon. (See the *Knights*.) Those soldiers having suffered great hardships, were in a miserable condition when they arrived at Athens, from whence they

were not dismissed till a long time afterwards. The philosophers affected to look pale and emaciated like them, to walk barefoot, and to live austere.

† As one who shews the curiosities of a cabinet.

SERVANT.

THE CLOUDS.

SERVANT.

To measure land.

STREPSIADES.

How! the conquered lands that are to be distributed by lot*?

SERVANT.

No, the whole earth.

STREPSIADES.

That is good news, indeed! fine news for Athens! Shall we then divide the whole earth amongst us?

SERVANT.

Observe, here is the whole earth, and this is the territory of Attica.

STREPSIADES.

I do not believe thee. Surely thou deceivest me; this cannot be Athens, for I do not see the judges fitting to hear causes†.

SERVANT.

No raillery! See, here is the whole territory of Athens.

STREPSIADES.

Where are the Cicynians, my dear countrymen, then? (Cicyna was the country of the Acamantide-tribe in Attica.)

SERVANT.

Here. And this is Eubæa. See, how far away it stretches!

STREPSIADES.

Aye! it stretches away from us, indeed, I know that but too

* It was usual for the Athenians to divide the conquered lands by lot, when they sent colonies to settle in any of them; thus, after the defection of Mitylena, they distributed the lands in shares (Thucyd. lib. iii.). They

did the same at Samos (Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. cap. 6.) and at Eubæa (Thucyd. lib. i.)

† A stroke of satire upon the passion the Athenians had for holding consultations and hearing causes.

well;

well; it is Pericles who alienated it from us, by subjecting it, and loading it with so many imposts *. But where is Lacedæmon?

SERVANT.

Here, very near us.

STREPSIADES.

Yes, it is too near us; I wish thou wouldst exert thy great skill to thrust it further from us †.

SERVANT.

That is not possible to be done.

STREPSIADES.

So much the worse for thee then. But, who is that man suspended in the air in a basket?

SERVANT.

That is he.

STREPSIADES.

He! what he?

SERVANT.

Socrates.

STREPSIADES.

Ho, Socrates, Socrates, &c.

The philosopher, buried in the most profound contemplation, seems at first not to hear that he is called, at last he comes to himself, and answers. The conversation between the servant and the countryman had already made Socrates ridiculous enough; but these are only the first outlines of that finished picture the poet draws of him in this scene, and throughout the whole comedy the ridicule increases till it has reached its utmost height.

* Pericles, after he had subjected it to Athens, divided some of the lands among the Athenians, and afterwards Eubæa continued to be extremely oppressed (Thucyd. lib. i.) There is likewise in this passage a play upon words which cannot be translated.

† This stroke was admirable, considering the time and the conjunctures to which it was applied. The Lacedæmonians were the first movers of the Peloponnesian war.

Aristophanes makes Socrates give a most whimsical reason for thus hoisting himself up in the air. "The earth, he says, would draw away all the subtle thoughts of the mind, just as wild cresses draw to themselves the moisture which should nourish the other plants that are nearest them." Socrates always used such familiar comparisons in his discourses, that his arguments might be better understood: and I cannot think F. Rapin altogether in the right when he asserts, that Socrates understood railery better than Aristophanes, who railed him. Both of them were great geniuses in this way; but one railed like a gay philosopher, and the other like a licentious comic poet, and this constituted the difference of their genius for railery.

The countryman, maliciously ignorant, mistakes the words of Socrates, in order to turn them into a jest, and then entering into the occasion of his coming to him, he tells him, that he would fain learn of so wise a neighbour how to pay his debts without money. The business is to teach him the art of speaking: "for," says he, the usurers torment me to death, and I am destroyed by horses, a disease which has consumed many others. I conjure thee, therefore, by the Gods, to assist me." Socrates interrupts him by asking, what Gods they are whom he swears by; adding, that in his school they do not acknowledge the Gods of the country*. The countryman desires to know, what Gods they swear by in his school, and if they swear, like the Byzantines, by copper Gods; from this passage we may collect, that the Byzantines made use of copper coin. Aristophanes having thus insinuated, that the first lesson his philosopher gives, is impiety to the Gods, he prepares to give him a second by questioning the new disciple on his inclinations for speculative philosophy; and he sounds him, in order to know whether he will acknowledge the great Goddesses of the school of Socrates, meaning the Clouds. Aristophanes here maliciously insinuates, that Socrates and his sectaries had no other object of their worship and meditations than mere chimeras. We shall find, that he attributes the same thing to Euripides, the friend of that philosopher, and to all

* This laid the foundation of that charge against Socrates of impiety, and it is upon this article that he defends himself in his apology.

those who followed him, except the great Alcibiades, whom nevertheless he sometimes ridicules in his comedies.

Strepsiades agrees to every thing, provided he may avoid paying his debts. His master begins to put his docility to a trial by ordering him to put on a garland, and to lye down on a couch: the disciple jests with his master upon this mysterious ceremony, which he thinks has the air of a sacrifice, and asks, if he is to be the victim. Socrates removes his doubts, by shewing him that such is the manner in which scholars are initiated in his school. He then pronounces a ludicrous invocation to the air and the clouds, as to supreme divinities, and conjures them to become visible, and to shew themselves to the new adept, who now regrets his not having brought his cloak with him to preserve him from being wet. It is thus that Aristophanes mingles jests, some good, some indifferent enough, with all the serious speeches of Socrates, to render them still more ridiculous than those which he puts in his mouth.

The invocation being repeated, the clouds, in the figure of women, with masks of a singular kind, begin to shew themselves in the air upon machines that look like clouds, and form that beautiful Chorus which madame Dacier so justly admires. In the composition of these Choruses both the tragic and comic poets of Greece exerted their utmost skill, these were the most laboured and most poetical passages in their plays. The Choruses of Aristophanes were a mixture of the serious and comic: they were sometimes sublime, sometimes low and trifling, and often parodies. It would be to no purpose to endeavour to render them in French, as they entirely depend upon the versification and the Grecian music, a translation, either in verse or prose, would not be relished.

Socrates, full of his enthusiasm, is struck with reverential awe at the noise of the thunder, and the appearance of the Goddesses; but, notwithstanding their repeated songs, Strepsiades has so dull an understanding, and so unphilosophical a sight, that he can neither hear nor see them. "Are they heroines," says he to Socrates. "No, replies Socrates, they are the deities of idle men, on whom they bestow wit, learning, judgment, the art of speaking in an unusual manner, exalted whims and elaborate inventions which seize and captivate the soul."

STREPSIADES.

It is certain, that while they spoke my heart seemed to leap within me, and I burnt with an eager desire to become a philosopher. Yes, I wish to reason with subtilty upon smoke, confute opinion with opinion, and contradict every thing that is said.

The countryman says all this without seeing the clouds, but intrtreats Socrates to point them out to him. Socrates has some difficulty to satisfy him; so great is the stupidity of his disciple. This produces an artifice of the stage as lively as it is satirical, to shew that the pupils of these philosophers have not the same facility in comprehending these chimeras as their masters. At length the clouds descend from their machines, fill the whole stage, and are visible to Strepsiades, who worships them. "Thou wert ignorant, says the philosopher, that these were Goddesses: thou knewest not, that by them sophists, priests, physicians, and poets were maintained." Strepsiades expresses his astonishment at beholding them in the figures of women, they whom he had always ignorantly believed to be nothing but mists. Hereupon Socrates, in his usual philosophical way of reasoning by questions, makes him understand, that the clouds assume whatever forms they please. From such trifling, Aristophanes draws one of the finest satires imaginable, and ridicules several of the spectators, "When they see Simon, says he, for example, that robber of the public, they transform themselves into wolves."

STREPSIADES.

So then when they beheld the cowardly Cleonymus * yesterday, they appeared in the shape of deer.

SOCRATES.

Yes; and now, because they perceive the effeminate Clifthenes, they have transformed themselves into women.

STREPSIADES.

Oh powerful deities! I adore you; if ever you deign to let a mortal hear your voices, grant this favour to me, I conjure you.

* The same who threw away his arms in a battle; he has been already mentioned.

The clouds grant his request for Socrates's sake, whom they were particularly desirous of obliging as well as Prodicus. Prodicus was a mercenary sophist, and with all his pretended knowledge an extravagant visionary: Aristophanes classes him here with Socrates, only to make his satire against this great philosopher more poignant by comparing him with a mad-man.

From this favour granted by the clouds, Socrates takes occasion to utter some blasphemies, and to treat Jupiter as a mere imaginary deity. It is surprising that this should have been suffered, although the poet's design was to represent Socrates as a man who denied the existence of the Gods. The arguments this philosopher makes use of to prove that there is no such being as Jupiter, are, that it is from the clouds alone the rain proceeds, and that Jupiter was never known to send down rain without them*. The explanation of thunder, conformable to that given by Des Cartes, is a continuation of the same lesson, but degenerates into a jest, which Aristophanes seldom fails to introduce whether seasonable or not: at length, we find that the purport of this scene is to require Strepsiades to renounce the Gods of the country, and to acknowledge no other deities but the clouds. Aristophanes here insinuates, that this was the first sacrifice which Socrates exacted from those who were desirous of becoming his disciples, and that he easily obtained it; for the countryman agrees to every thing, in the hope that he shall not be obliged to pay his creditors. The clouds, upon condition that he will acknowledge no other divinities but themselves, and that he will live an austere and philosophical life, grant his request, which is that he may be able to corrupt justice, that he may borrow and not be obliged to pay. Be directed by Socrates, say they to him, and thou wilt succeed.

Strepsiades yields to every thing that is required of him, to be cloathed in rags, to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and heat; in a word, to be a true philosopher, provided Socrates will teach him the art he is so desirous of being master of. The philosopher be-

* There is a beautiful medal of Antoninus the Good, T. AIA. K. ANTONINOS, on which is represented a Jupiter who rains without clouds. He is seated upon his throne, and from a cornucopia pours out a

fruitful rain upon the earth, which is under his feet. This medal was a monument of the affection of the Ephesians to Antoninus. ΠΕΙΩΝ ΕΦΕΣΕΙΩΝ, *piorum Ephesiorum*. It is in the king's possession.

gins by soothing his pupil with hopes of being as famous as himself, consulted on all occasions by a croud of admirers, and the like, without reckoning the pecuniary rewards * which he might expect. He then, by the advice of the Chorus, examines him with regard to his abilities, his memory, and his inclination for the study of eloquence; this makes a very humorous scene: for the countryman swears, that he has no memory for any thing but what sums of money are due to him, and no other inclinations but to forget what he owes. Socrates, to put him to the trial, prepares to give him some lashes with a whip: he makes him pull off his cloak, and the countryman still maintaining his character of arch-simplicity; balances a moment between fear and hope of resembling Charephon, the best loved, but most emaciated of all Socrates's disciples: however, he consents to enter the school, and submit to the usual discipline.

Here begins that beautiful digression of the Chorus, part of which belongs to the second *Clouds*, and part to the former. It will be necessary to give the reader the whole passage, because it throws great light upon every thing relating to Aristophanes, and particularly upon the date of this comedy, and the reception it met with. After Socrates had made his new disciple go into his house, that is to say, the cave of Trophonius †, as Strepsiades ludicrously calls it, in derision of that school where men for ever ceased to laugh, like those who once entered the cave. The Chorus, speaking a few words to the master and disciple, turn towards the spectators, and address them in this manner:

"Gentlemen, I take Bacchus ‡, my father and my master, to witness, that what I am going to say to you is true. May I be crowned conqueror in these games, and may you think me as good a writer, as I allow you to be judicious critics! This co-

* This is an unjust accusation, for Socrates was quite disinterested.

† Trophonius took upon him to pronounce oracles from the bottom of a cave near Delphos. This cave became very famous, and great numbers used to resort there to consult the oracle; but, as it was the abode of a serpent, those who approached the cave, used either by way of precaution, or through superstition, to throw into it some

cakes made of meal and honey; and therefore Strepsiades says, that he ought to have provided himself with some cakes before he entered the house of Socrates. It is related, that those who once entered the cave of Trophonius, were never afterwards seen to laugh.

‡ He swears by Bacchus, as being the God of comic poets, because comedies were represented during the feasts of Bacchus.

"medy

" medy I exhibited once before as the best I had ever written,
 " and I intreated you to examine it with as much care, as I took
 " pains in composing it. However, I had the misfortune to find
 " two very unworthy competitors * preferred before me, a fate
 " I little deserved to meet with. This is the complaint which I
 " presume to lay before you, and all men of sense and candor, to
 " whom I have dedicated my labours. But do not suppose that
 " I intend no longer to exert my endeavours to please you, or that
 " I have forgot the favourable reception you gave to my first
 " piece †; and the pleasure you received from the two youths,
 " the one wise and regular in his conduct, the other a wild de-
 " bauchee, two characters which make all the business of it ‡.
 " Not having then attained the age at which our laws || permit
 " a poet to exhibit his dramatic works on the stage; I concealed
 " my name when I presented you with this first fruit of my
 " labours, and you received it with applause. Ever since I have
 " always depended upon having your votes in my favour. And
 " now, gentlemen, I come to offer you a comedy, which, like
 " another Electra |||, seeks some certain marks by which she may
 " discover her friends. Should she find any locks of her brother's
 " hair, she will soon know them to be his ¶. Judge then, I intreat
 " you, of the decency with which my Electra (*my comedy*) ap-
 " pears. She comes not with tattered robes § to make children
 " laugh; she does not debase her dignity by cold jests upon bald-
 " ness, and indecent dances; she will not introduce before you
 " an old man, who with his stick strikes every one he meets, to
 " make his false wit go down; she does not appear like a fury
 " with lighted torches, nor utters ridiculous lamentations. She
 " comes supported by her own merit, and with unborrowed
 " graces: yet I do not make my boast of these advantages; nor
 " do I endeavour to impose upon your judgment by giving you
 " the same thing two or three times over. It is my care always
 " to produce new and uncommon images. I may boast of having

* Cratinus and Ameipias; probably these poets said the same of Aristophanes.

† The *Daitalians*, a people of Attica.

‡ Galen has preserved a fragment of it, which confirms what is here said.

|| The poet was required to be either thirty or forty years old.

||| A satirical allusion to the discovery of Orestes by Electra in Eschylus's tragedy.

¶ He means that at the smallest sign of approbation she will know the audience which formerly applauded the *Daitalians*.

§ Satirical strokes against the poets, his competitors.

" over-

“overthrown the formidable Cleon* : but I have not insulted his memory since his death. My rivals do not follow these rules : ever since Hyperbolus drew all your suffrages, nothing is seen on the stage but Hyperbolus and his mother. Eupolis at first wrote his comedy of *Marica* † on this subject, in which he was not ashamed to pillage boldly from my *Knights*; all he added of his own being an old woman who performed an indecent dance; and this old woman he stole from Phrynichus, who had shewn her devoured by a sea-monster. To him the poet Hermippus succeeded : and then another Hyperbolus ‡ was brought into play; and in the most subtle manner imaginable my eels § were stolen from me. Let those who laugh at such comedies, look grave at mine ! This is all the harm I wish them. As for you, gentlemen, if you are pleased with my comedies, I promise you that henceforwards I will allow you to be most judicious critics.”

It is very plain that this speech of the Chorus was composed for the second representation of the *Clouds*; secondly, that it was the former comedy revised, corrected, and enlarged, that was represented; thirdly, that Cleon was dead when it was represented a second time : and that quotation from *Marica*, where Eupolis speaks of Cleon as dead, is an unanswerable proof of it. To this, if we join a passage from the *Wasps*, where it is said that the comedy of the *Clouds* was acted a year before, it is evident, that the *Clouds* was represented the first and second time in those years we have already marked. And should it be allowed that the scholiasts have led us into a mistake, after having been mistaken themselves with regard to the comedy of *Marica*, which supposes Cleon to be dead, this will prove nothing more than that the *Clouds* was twice represented before the death of that general, or before the tenth year of the Peloponnesian war; and consequently there was the same distance of time between its first representation and the death of Socrates. Here follows the speech made by the Chorus

* In his comedy of the *Knights*, and others.

† The scholiasts say, that in this comedy, written by Eupolis, Cleon was mentioned as being dead.

‡ A man of low birth, a lamp-lighter, who, like Cleon, found the secret of making

himself feared, and durst venture to attack the greatest men in the state.

§ Aristophanes mentions eels in his comedy of the *Knights*. It was the lake Copaie in Boeotia that produced those delicious eels. It is probable, that there are many allusions here of which we have not the key.

to the audience, which we find after the former, and at the end of an invocation :

" Gentlemen, do us the favour to listen to us patiently ; we who speak to you are the Clouds, and we have great reason to be offended at your conduct towards us. Have any of your Gods bestowed upon you benefits equal to those you have received from us ? And yet we have no libations from you, no sacrifices, we who are your tutelary divinities. Would you set out at any improper time for your farms in the country, you are obliged to turn back again, by a shower of rain, or a storm of thunder. When the fancy takes you to place that Paphlagonian, that leather-seller, that Cleon, at the head of your armies, we look gloomily on you, the thunder rolls, the moon forsakes her wonted course *, the sun hides her beams, and threatens to shine no more for you, if you elect Cleon for your general ; yet he is elected. Remember the proverb, Bad councils prevail, and the Gods repair all †. Now, if you would know what you must do to atone for these errors in your conduct, follow my advice : take that bird of prey ‡, that public robber Cleon, and put him in the pillory §, then, all things will be restored to their former state, and your very faults shall end happily for you."

In the former speech of the Chorus, Cleon was dead, in this he is alive, therefore, these two speeches must have been composed in two different years. But give it what turn you will, we must necessarily conclude, upon the evidence of Aristophanes himself, that this comedy was composed and acted between the battle of Pylos under Cleon, and the death of Cleon : between the seventh and the tenth years of the Peloponesian war, and consequently above three and twenty years before the condemnation of Socrates §.

* There was an eclipse of the moon about the time that Cleon was sent to Pylos in the quality of general. Aristophanes mentions it in the *Knights*. Some time afterwards there was an eclipse of the sun.

† Demosthenes said as much to the Athenians in his orations.

‡ *Larus*, a voracious water-fowl, according to Suidas.

§ Squeeze his neck in a hollow piece of wood.

§ Or at least thirteen years before his death, if Socrates was but sixty years old when he drank the poison, as some have written ; an opinion but little followed.

There

There is also another passage in this play addressed to the audience, but it is a piece of humour, and of less consequence to this question than those we have just quoted. The Clouds say, that they salute the Athenians in the name of the moon, who is, however, a little displeased with them, because that notwithstanding the benefits they receive from her, were it only in saving them the expence of torches *, she meets with nothing but ingratitude in return, since all the festivals are in horrible confusion, and the Gods, who are disappointed of their sacrifices at the usual time, lay the fault on her, that instead of festivals they hold fasts, and law-suits instead of vacations; that in Olympus a dreadful outcry is raised against her, as if she was the cause that the Athenians regulated their calendar so ill.

It is not easy to assign a reason for this confusion of the feasts which Aristophanes speaks of here; the several conjectures that have been given are mere conjectures, and of too great length to be examined. Whether the golden number, or the cycle of *Meton*, were then introduced or not, the difficulty still remains; and it seems probable, that this disorder had taken its rise from an attempt to adjust their feasts to that cycle, rather than otherwise †. It is still less necessary to dwell long upon the rest of this comedy.

ACT II.

Socrates, after having stripped his disciple of his cloak, apparently to make use of it himself, and after having given him some preparatory instructions, brings him back on the stage, swearing by chaos and the air, that he never met with so dull a blockhead as Strepsiades before. But Strepsiades is, we find, a sensible fellow

* It appears by this passage, and many others, in which Aristophanes ridicules the parsimony of the Athenians, that they were really frugal to a fault.

† See what the learned Mr. Ezech. Spanheim has said in his Notes to the edition of Aristophanes by Kuster. It is his sentiment that I have here given; however, it is not improbable, that the cycle of *Meton* was not adapted till some time after this piece was

represented. The Greeks, in order to determine the point in which the sun and the moon meet, had at first taken eight years, then eleven, but always with a considerable error. *Meton* was the first that advised by joining eight and eleven to fix the term of nineteen years when the return of the moon and the sun, without any great error for those times.

with a malicious turn of wit, who, without seeming to do so, turns his master into ridicule. Aristophanes would give us to understand, that true good sense, which the philosophers call stupidity, is incapable of imbibing the lessons of philosophy; so very different is philosophy from common sense.

The master calls his pupil, and commands him to bring his bed and lie down upon it. Strepsiades obeys very unwillingly, humorously exclaiming against the Corinthians, who fasten upon his neck, and who join with Socrates to plunder him. He gives this name to certain vermin, with which he suspects the philosophical furniture of his master's house to be infected. This whole scene turns upon a great number of silly things which Socrates is made to speak in his philosophical way, which Strepsiades exaggerates by a humorous contrast; as for example, Socrates begins much in the same manner as the teacher of philosophy in the *Bourgeois-Gentilhomme* *: "Well, what is it you desire to learn? Measures, harmony, cadence?"

STREPSIADES.

Oh, measures! by all means; for it is not long since a certain person imposed upon me by a false measure.

Socrates pursues his discourse, and Strepsiades his, both always answering according to their own thought. Strepsiades at length entering upon the business, asks what advantage harmony will be to him: It will teach him how to acquire a genteel air in conversation. "I care not, replies he, for your pyrrhicks, nor dactyles; teach me how to defend injustice by argument."

The more solicitous Strepsiades is to come to the point, the greater pains Socrates takes to keep him from it, and to shew him, that it is necessary he should learn many things first. He gives him a lesson of grammar, but a very malicious one; for, in teaching him to distinguish the names of things grammatically, he strikes at several Athenians noted for their cowardice, or debauchery, particularly Cleonymus and Amunias.

Socrates afterwards orders his disciple to lie down on his bed, to meditate closely upon one thought; and if he finds he is not able to make any thing of it, to fix upon another, to let his ima-

* It is plain, that Moliere has imitated this scene of Aristophanes.

gination dwell upon it, to divide, define, contemplate, and to discover, by the force of his own understanding, some method of defrauding his creditors. This artifice of the stage, which expresses all the little affectations of the profound Speculists of that age, their pedantic grimaces, and the dexterous artifices which were attributed to them, gives great liveliness to this act. But if the *Femmes Sçavantes* of Moliere found it at first so difficult to please the polite world, on account of their singular character, it cannot be expected that the character of an Athenian philosopher should meet with better success, however finely it may be drawn. But we will go on, without dwelling too long upon every circumstance.

STREPSIADES.

What is it that you would have me study for?

SOCRATES.

Tell me yourself what you wish to know.

STREPSIADES.

I have told you a thousand times, I would find out some method to avoid paying my debts.

This, though burlesqued, was the true manner of Socrates: without explaining his own sentiments, he obliged others to disclose theirs; which made him be called the midwife of minds.

The countryman, weary of tossing about on his bed, at length declares, that he has found out the secret he sought for. This is a jest which we cannot understand. "If I could purchase, says he, a Theſſalian witch, and by her help seize upon the moon, and shut it up in a case like a glaſs"

SOCRATES.

What then?

STREPSIADES.

Why, then there would be no moon, and I should not be obliged to pay interest.

SOCRATES.

How can that be?

STREPSIADES.

Nothing can be clearer: there would be no longer any months, and consequently no more payments at the end of each month.

Socra-

Socrates, in his turn, proposes another subtilty. He asks him, what he would do if he was condemned to pay five talents? Strepsiades ruminates a few moments, according to the advice of his master, who had directed him to give free scope to his wit, as children do to beetles, after they have fastened packthread to their legs; for Socrates used to say, that the soul had wings to raise itself above terrestrial objects; so that these comparisons were familiar to him. Strepsiades at length hits upon a fine expedient, which is to post himself behind the scrivener, to hold a burning glass to the rays of the sun, and to burn all the writings he is preparing against him. I do not find that any commentator has taken notice of these five talents: however, it is plain, that Aristophanes here alludes to the fine of five talents which Cleon was condemned to pay upon being convicted of embezzling the public money*. But what the poet has in view by this conceit of the burning glass, I know not. There are many allusions which are equally unintelligible; as for example, Strepsiades can think of no other method to avoid the consequences of being cast in a law-suit, but to hang himself; and perhaps the jest here lies only in the simplicity of this expedient. Socrates, not being able to improve the dull wit of his disciple, and hopeless of making a philosopher of him, advises him to send his son to him in his stead. To this Strepsiades consents, saying that his son, when a child, discovered great wit, and endeavours to prove it with the same simplicity as Diafoirus does, that his son Thomas has very sprightly parts. Moliere has copied many passages in this comedy.

A C T III.

Strepsiades, as if possessed with the Socratic spirit, and the enthusiasm of the clouds, pushes his son Phidippidus out of doors, and swears by his new divinities, that he shall live no longer with him. "Go, rogue, (says he) and feed, if thou wilt, upon the pillars of Megacles's house." Probably that family to which Strepsiades was allied, had spent all their estate, except the palace of Megacles. The comic poignancy of this scene is exactly the same with that of the *Bourgeois-Gentilhomme*, who endeavours to teach his wife and his servant the lessons he had received from his

* See the *Acbarians*.

masters. The copy is more conformable to our manners, but it is not so spirited as the original, which Moliere has very carefully studied. It is true, Strepsiades does not here coldly narrate to his son what had passed, as the *Citizen turned Gentleman* does, to madame Jourdain and to Nicolle in Moliere's comedy, but he speaks in the same taste, with much greater vivacity. For having his head full of the great mysteries he had been instructed in by Socrates, he utters them without method or connexion to his son, and insists upon his going immediately to take his place in the same school.

Phidippides, who believes his father to be mad, gazes astonished, like madame Jourdain when she saw her husband in the trappings of a Turk, without being able to comprehend a word he says, and this constitutes the whole humour of this dialogue. The son swears by Jupiter; the father is greatly shocked at this oath, and tells him, that since he has heard Socrates, he knows there is no such God as Jupiter.

PHIDIPPIDES.

Who is it that asserts this blasphemy?

STREPSIADES.

Who? why, Socrates, Diagoras the Melian*, and Chærephon, who has calculated the leaps of a flea.

PHIDIPPIDES.

Are you mad, father, that you believe these splenetic fools?

STREPSIADES.

Softly, son, if you please; do not defame those wise men, who are so frugal that they are never at the charge of a barber, never make use of perfumes or baths, whereas thou spendest my estate as if I was already dead. But this is not the business. Go to them, and be their scholar in my room.

It is not difficult to discover here the original of some strokes in the *Malade imaginaire*, with regard to physicians.

* Diagoras was a native of Melos; therefore, when Aristophanes says the Melian, he means Diagoras. He was supposed to be an atheist, and the comic poets insinuated

the same of all the philosophers, in order to discredit them; but to be convinced that Socrates acknowledged a divinity, we need only read Plato.

PHIDIPPIDES.

What can such fellows teach me?

STREPSIADES.

All things that are good and wise, truth itself; as for example, that thou art a beast, a fool. But stay a moment, I will return presently.

PHIDIPPIDES.

Sure, my father is mad, what shall I do with him? Shall I exhibit a charge of lunacy against him in a court of justice, or shall I deliver him over to the physician's executioner*, as a man who is in a few days to be laid in the earth?

The father returns, bringing with him a cock and a hen, which are expressed by the same word in Greek. Socrates had done the same, when he gave him a lesson of grammar, and asks him concerning the one and the other bird; the son answers him, as he had answered Socrates. "Thou art a fool, says Strepsiades to him, thou art ignorant of the first elements of grammar." There is here some concealed raillery, which we are not able to apply. Moliere has imitated this passage in his *Citizen turned Gentleman*, who admires and repeats the lesson that had been given him upon the manner of pronouncing vowels, consonants, and syllables; a satirical allusion to a book which was then in great reputation. The original of these satirical strokes is Aristophanes's: in another age, as much of Moliere's wit will be lost, as of Aristophanes's in ours.

Strepsiades assures his son, that he has learned many other fine things of the same kind; but that being old, his memory fails him: therefore it is fit that he should take his place in the school of these great philosophers.

Phidippides observing, that his father had neither cloke, nor shoes, asks him, "Whether he had lost his cloke in learning these subtle mysteries?"

STREPSIADES.

Oh no, I have not lost it, but have converted it into pure philosophy.

* Madame Dacier has passed over this interred the dead. The sense I have followed seems to be the true one.

PHIDIPPIDES.

And what have you done with your shoes?

STREPSIADES.

I have made use of them for the publick occasions, as Pericles did of the treasurers of the citadel.

This alludes to a very singular speech of Pericles. Suidas says, that Pericles expended great part of these treasures in the Peloponnesian war; and that, when he gave up his accounts, he contented himself with saying, upon the article of fifty talents, that he had expended them *for the publick occasions*; and this was thought sufficient. The Lacedæmonians hearing of it, confiscated Cleander's estate, and condemned Plistoanax to pay a fine of five talents, alleging that those two generals, one of whom was their king, had been secretly bribed to spare part of Attica; and that Pericles, when he gave in his accounts, mentioned that article so obscurely only to spare the kings of Sparta the reproach of baseness and treachery.

The old man uses every expedient to prevail upon his son to attend the school of Socrates. "Come, boy, come along with me," says he; if thou dost wrong, it is I who forces thee to do it. "But remember when thou wast a child, I was ready to gratify thee in all thy whimsical desires. The first obole* I received for attending the publick assembly, I laid out upon a little cart for thee at the feasts of Jupiter."

Phidippides says aside, that he will make his father repent the violence he does him; and he keeps his word. Socrates enters, and Strepsiades delivers his son to him. "I have at length persuaded him," says he, in spite of himself." This stroke falls directly upon Socrates's manner of reasoning, which reduced his opponents to the necessity of acknowledging, though unwillingly,

* Aristophanes calls the obole *beliaistique*, from the place where the Athenians held their most numerous assemblies. At first, each person, who attended, received only one obole, or the sixth part of a drachma; afterwards two were given, and at length three, at the desire of Cleon, who made a merit to the people of having procured this augmentation.

This gratuity, which the comic poet looked upon as mean and sordid, he has ridiculed in a thousand places. The sum, indeed, to each individual was but a trifle, though in the whole a very considerable one to the state, since the three oboles were but equal in value to five pence of our money.

the force of his arguments, by making them fall into absurdities from which they could no otherwise extricate themselves.

SOCRATES, *speaking of Phidippides.*

He appears to be an untaught youth, who has never yet suspended himself in the air like one of us*.

PHIDIPPIDES, *muttering.*

Would I could see thee hanged.

STREPSIADES.

How darest thou talk thus insolently to thy master?

SOCRATES.

Observe how awkwardly he uttered that silly speech! Alas, how shall he be taught to elude a suit of law, to cavil successfully with his adversary, and throw dust in the eyes of his judges? Hyperbolus †, however, would give a talent to know as much.

STREPSIADES.

Forget his pertness, and condescend to take him under your care. He is naturally ingenious; for when he was but a child, he would build little houses, ships and chariots, make frogs, and such things. What do you think of him ‡? Is it not probable that he may be taught those two favourite means, *right* and *wrong*, the hinges upon which your whole doctrine turns? If he does not learn them both, yet he will have wit enough surely to learn the *wrong*.

SOCRATES.

I will endeavour to teach him both.

STREPSIADES, *going.*

Farewell, Socrates! Do not forget to arm him completely against the *right* at least.

The countryman is scarce gone off the stage, when *Right* and *Wrong* appear in person. This is a bold allegory, and the personages extravagant enough, but worthy of Aristophanes, and ca-

* Has never meditated.

† A lamp-lighter, who has been mentioned before. He enriched himself by his

frauds, according to Aristophanes.

‡ Here again is Thomas Diafoirus.

pable of raising mirth in those who had, or have any knowledge of Socrates, and his everlasting talk of *right* and *wrong*. We must, therefore, conceive these two things as actors, dressed out by the poet with the same grotesque air as his other buffooneries.

Right defies his rival to appear before the audience; but *Wrong*, who knows what sort of judges he has to deal with, instantly presents himself to the spectators, being very sure, he says, that such arbitrators as they are will give him the victory over his competitor. This is a good beginning of that satire which is kept up throughout the whole scene; for the former asserts, that he is the strongest *, and the latter alleges, that, although he is the weakest, he always comes off victorious. *Right* says, that it is only with fools (pointing either to the audience in general, or to the philosophers); and *Wrong* says, it is with the wise, pointing to the same persons. *Right* says, that to triumph he need only to shew himself; *Wrong* denies, that there is any shadow of him in the universe. How, not among the Gods? No not even with Jupiter himself. This is said to render the philosophers hateful for their impiety. Accordingly *Right* loads his rival with invectives for his contempt of the Gods; and the other affecting a philosophical calmness, answers all his abuse with praises and thanks, like Socrates and the other subjects of the comedy, who to each insult reply, *That is very good*. So *Wrong* cries: "Doeſt thou perceive that thou art doing me honour; that thou art loading me with golden gifts?" The keenness of their mutual upbraidings forms a very lively scene, but not agreeable to our manners. The former, when he reproaches his rival with corrupting the Athenians, and debauching their youth; the answers of the latter to this charge, and the efforts each makes to have the care of educating Phidippides, in the same manner as virtue and vice contend for Hercules †, shew but too plainly to what a degree the comic poets carried their boldness in decrying Athens; and how far the Athenians understood raillery, without giving themselves any concern for the opinion which posterity might entertain of them, and their still less solicitude to correct their faults.

* *Κρείων*, or the stronger, is the name by which philosophers express the *Right*:
 ἥττων, or the weaker, is the name of the

Wrong. These two denominations give room to many antitheses.

† Hercules in *bravo*.

The contest grows so warm that the Chorus are obliged to interpose, and insist that the two competitors shall manage the dispute with calmness, and give in their arguments at length. "Upon which, say they, depend the fate of philosophy, and the quarrels of our friends the philosophers."

Hereupon *Right* begins his speech. He describes the austere discipline of the old times, when equity flourished, when the Athenian youth were remarkable for their docility, their unwearied attention to their studies, and their profound respect for their masters: he expatiates upon the wholesome severity of their education, their modesty, the excellency of the music of that age, so different from the effeminate tones introduced by Phrynis*, the great importance of this strict education, and its happy effects, decency of manners, sobriety, and chastity.

"Truly, says *Wrong*, all this might suit very well with those times when they adorned their hair with golden grass-hoppers," &c. This sort of jewels, which have been taken notice of before, were in fashion at the time of the warriors of Marathon. In that glorious age the bravest of the Athenians were fond of magnificence in dress. He, who appears in the character of *Right*, answers his rival, that the picture he has drawn is that of the ancient heroes, not the youth of the present time, who are educated in luxury, who have neither vigour of mind, nor strength of body. He exhorts Phidippides to be governed by the wise maxims he had given, to despise the wrangling of courts of law, to do nothing shameful, to respect his parents, to reverence old age, to fly the allurements of unchaste women; in a word, to be wholly virtuous. The ancient and the new manners of the Athenians are finely contrasted in this speech.

Wrong shrugs up his shoulders, and smiles contemptuously, to insinuate to Phidippides, that all this discourse is mere trifling; but *Right* pursues his arguments, and tells the young man, that if he will follow his rules, he will enjoy a perfect state of health, be distinguished in all manly exercises, and have the advantage of neither speaking nor hearing any of those foolish things which are said and heard in courts of justice; that he will spend his time in learned and useful conversations, and be always wise and happy:

* Phrynis had softened the ancient music, and the ancients considered music as one great test of regular or dissolute manners.

but on the contrary, if he lives like other young men of his age, he will be wretched, and, to comprise all misfortunes in a word, he will be as infamous as Antimachus; a keen satire upon that citizen, if we may judge by what has gone before.

The Chorus, although composed of the clouds, imaginary divinities, yet perform the office of the Chorus, by praising the virtuous precepts they have just heard; but *Wrong* now takes his turn to speak, grieved that he had been obliged to be silent so long. He begins with declaring, that the philosophers were to blame, to call him the *weakest*, since he was the first who invented the art of opposing justice and the laws, for which he deserved rewards without number*. “For, pursues he, what can be more meritorious than an art which, though called *inferiour*, is sure to come off victorious?” He then addresses his discourse to Phidippides, and ludicrously expatiates upon several of the Athenian customs which his rival had condemned. “He talks of hot baths,” says he; and where lies the wonder? Did Hercules love cold baths? A humorous stroke, and worthy of the art attributed here to Socrates. Whatever the fabulous tradition may be, it is certain, that hot baths were called *Herculean*, and that gave occasion for this stroke of wit.

The defender of *Wrong* proceeds to the frequenting popular assemblies, and the art of making orations. “Does not Homer, says he, tell us, that Nestor was an orator?” *Wrong*, by the same kind of frivolous reasoning, endeavours to overthrow virtue and wisdom, to insinuate that the philosophical arguments of Socrates were not more forcible. “Of what use is virtue to us?” says he; of none. What advantage did Peleus receive from the fine sword † the Gods presented him with? Hyperbolus accumulated more riches in the paltry trade of making lamps; he is a rogue, and has raised an estate at the expence of the public.”

Upon the strength of these principles, *Wrong* asks Phidippides, how he will be able to extricate himself out of those inconveniencies which men of his age fall into every day, without he makes himself master of the art of turning black into white; and exhorts him to be as wicked as he can, secure of finding an inexhaustible resource in the assistance his new master will give him.

* More than a thousand staters.

† It was said, that Peleus being once in

great danger, Mercury gave him a sword, to defend himself with.

The defender of *Right* asks in his turn, what will be the consequence if this young man should be branded as an infamous wretch, for having followed such pernicious instructions? This question gives rise to one of those cynical satires, which render alike abominable the Athenians who are censured, and Aristophanes their censurer.

WRONG.

What wouldst thou say if I should prove that thou art in the wrong?

RIGHT.

I would acknowledge that I am so, and be silent.

WRONG.

Then tell me, what sort of men are our orators?

RIGHT.

Rogues.

WRONG.

Agreed; and what are our makers of tragedies?

RIGHT.

Rogues.

WRONG.

Very right; and our magistrates what are they?

RIGHT.

Rogues.

WRONG.

Excellently answered. Why then, thou must be convinced thou hast been in the wrong: but come now, count the spectators, see whether the good be the greater number, examine.

RIGHT, *looking round.*

Let me see.

WRONG.

Well.

RIGHT, *pointing to several of the spectators.*

The rogues are more numerous. There sits one whom I know to be a rogue - - - and there I see another - - - and that fop there - - -

RIGHT.

Well, what dost thou say now?

K k 2

WRONG.

WRONG.

Why, that I have lost. (*to the audience.*) Gentlemen, take my cloak *, I will jump in among you, you are the strongest.

Socrates, perceiving Strepsiades who returns to him, asks him, whether he held his resolution to have his son made a philosopher after the right way. "Yes, answers the countryman; " chastise him if it be necessary; but be sure to make his tongue " as sharp as a two-edged knife, that with one side he may be " able to clack in little petty causes, with the other to thunder in " greater affairs."

SOCRATES.

Leave me to manage him, take my word for it, I will make him one of the most subtle cavillers in Attica.

PHIDIPPIDES, *aside.*

That is, pale, emaciated, and a complete philosopher.

CHORUS.

Go in with Socrates, Phidippides. (*aside.*) But some body will repent it.

As soon as the young man has entered the house of Socrates, the Clouds address themselves to the judges of the piece, who probably sat in a distinguished place in the theatre. They promise them, that if they will do justice to the merit of the comedy, they will give them rain and sun-shine in due season, and make their lands fruitful; but, that if they presume to despise such powerful divinities as they are, they will destroy their vineyards with frost, and lay all their plantations waste. These are the terms they make use of.

ACT IV.

Strepsiades traverses the school in great anxiety of mind, reckoning the last days of the month, in the manner of the

* He pretends to throw away his cloak, as if he would jump into the pit.

Greeks *, " five, four, three, two, in the last tenth of the month," and finds that the dreadful day is approaching, namely the last day of the month, called the old and new moon. This was the day appointed for payment of interest. The chief cause of his present uneasiness is, that his creditors have deposited money in the hands of the judges to defray the expences of a suit against him, and threaten to ruin him, if he does not pay them immediately. What shall he do? for to pay them is not the question. " I have made them, says he, very reasonable proposals. Hear me, said I to them, of the three sums which I owe you, refuse one, give me time to pay the other, and forgive me the third †. " Instead of being satisfied with this, they call me a rogue, and threaten to sue me instantly. And let them, I care not, provided my son Phidippides has learnt the art to speak subtilly. I will know that soon."

Here he knocks at the door, Socrates appears, and after receiving a present of a sack of meal, he tells him, that his son has learned enough to baffle an adversary, and deny a debt although contracted before a thousand witnesses. At this news the old man rejoices, and anticipates the triumph he shall have over his creditors by opposing to them a pupil of Socrates. Phidippides comes out, and his father embraces him with transport. " Let me embrace thee, my son, says he. By thy pale countenance I take it for granted that thou canst contradict and deny boldly; that thou art instructed in the whole art of cheating, and hast acquired the true Attick eloquence. What sayst thou - - - Ha, thou hast the look of one who canst persuade the world that thou art wronged, when it is thou that dost the wrong. Yes, thou hast the air of a true Athenian. But come, since thou hast almost undone me by thy extravagancies, endeavour to recover my fortune."

PHIDIPPIDES.

What is it that thou art afraid of?

* Going backwards in his computation: thus they reckoned the last ten days of the month, that is to say, the 26th, the 27th, the 28th, the 29th of July. Scaliger says, the ancients had at first but three principal numbers; *ἓν, one, δύο, two, τρία, three*; that in reckoning, after these, they said, *then another*,

χ' ἄριστον, whence came *four*; after *χ' ἄριστον*, they said, *καὶ ἓν ἔτι, and one more*, thence *quingus* or *five*: the names of the other numbers as far as ten were gradually adopted in the sequel.

† He seems to allude to the lion's division of the prey, in *Æsop's fables*.

THE CLOUDS.

STREPSIADES.

Why, I confess I am a little afraid of this old and new moon.

PHIDIPPIDES.

A good reason this for being afraid! How can the same moon be old and new?

STREPSIADES.

Certainly it must be so; for my creditors threaten to sue me in the court that day, and have deposited money for that purpose.

PHIDIPPIDES.

Well, they will lose their money then, for it is not possible for one day to be two.

STREPSIADES.

How wilt thou make that out?

PHIDIPPIDES.

How! why, can a woman be at once old and young?

STREPSIADES.

But my creditors will tell me that the law has settled it so.

PHIDIPPIDES.

They do not understand the meaning of the law.

STREPSIADES.

Say, what is the meaning of it?

PHIDIPPIDES.

Old Solon loved the people*.

STREPSIADES.

What is this to the old and new moon?

Phidippides maintains, that by the laws of Solon two different days were appointed for the creditors to appear and avoid the ex-

* This is I believe an indirect and malignant stroke at Solon, and at democracy, which he introduced. It must necessarily be, that Aristophanes was a little inclined to an

aristocratical government, for in his comedy of the *Birds*, he feigns that he is reproached with being so.

pences of the depositum, namely, the last day of the month, or of the old moon, and the second day of the month, or the new moon *, on which those debtors who have neglected to pay their debts, are sued in form.

STREPSIADES.

But, why then do the magistrates, without waiting till the first day of the new month, begin the proceedings against creditors on the thirtieth of the former, by receiving the sums offered to be deposited?

PHIDIPPIDES.

The magistrates act like hungry servants who taste the meat before it is served up to table.

STREPSIADES, *eagerly*.

Now you, gentlemen, the spectators, why do you sit here like fools, while my son and I do our business at your expence? &c.

This is a severe stroke of satire; but the Athenians laughed at every thing, and at themselves the first. Strepsiades has now nothing more to do, but to put in practice the science his son has just taught him. An opportunity presents itself immediately, for scarce has he carried Phidippides home to regale him, when he is stopped by Pafias, an usurer, to whom he owes twelve *minas*. This usurer brings a witness along with him, and demands his money, being resolved to sue him on the day of the old and new moon, that is, on the thirtieth day of the month: but Strepsiades turns his threats into a jest, and taking advantage of his new science, calls his servants to witness, that Pafias threatens to sue him on two different days, on the day of the old moon, and on the day of the new: he acknowledges indeed, that he swore by Jupiter to pay the money, but that it has been proved to him since, that there is no such God as Jupiter. He then puts the same question in grammar to Pafias as Socrates had to him; and Pafias not answering in the Socratic manner, he pushes him away, and laughs at his menaces, telling him, that when he was so stupid as to promise to pay him, his son had not been instructed in the principles of philosophy.

* The Greeks called the first day of the month *neomenia*, new moon, or new month.

Pafias is succeeded by Amunias, another creditor, who after uttering some lamentations, on account of his having had a chariot broke in pieces, which Strepsiades maliciously compares to the complaints made by the Gods in a tragedy of Carcinus, insists upon being paid his principal and interest. The countryman extricates himself out of this new difficulty by other jests, and treats the creditor as a madman, and to prove to him, that he has lost his reason. "What dost thou think of rain? says he: Does it fall from heaven, or does the sun exhale it from the sea?"

AMUNIAS.

I neither know, nor care. If thou hast not the whole sum, pay me the interest at least.

STREPSIADES.

Interest! What animal is that?

AMUNIAS.

It is the increase of money by months and days, as time runs on.

STREPSIADES.

Oh, thou art talking of gold. But come, answer me one question: Dost thou think the sea is fuller now than it was formerly?

AMUNIAS.

No, how should it?

STREPSIADES.

Ah, rogue, thou confessest that the sea is not increased by the rivers that run into it, and yet thou dost expect that thy money should increase at such an exorbitant rate! Be gone from my door. Bring me a cudgel*. (*Here he drives him about the stage, and the witness, which, according to custom, he had brought with him, and then goes into his own house.*)

The Chorus prepare the spectators for the conclusion, by declaring that they disapprove of such frauds, and the art which has given rise to them; and they foretell, that Strepsiades and the philosophers will be punished for their wickedness. For Aristophanes, after having represented so many impieties and crimes, was under a

* In the original a tuck.

necessity of concluding his play in such a manner as might remove these bad impressions; and this he does with great art in the fifth act.

A C T V.

Strepsiades runs out of his house, crying out murder, and begging for assistance against his son, who had beat him most inhumanly. The son follows him, and very calmly maintains, that he had done right to beat his father, and shews that he remembers and practises extremely well the lessons which *Wrong* had given him; for, when his father calls him a wicked wretch, a parricide, and the like, he answers calmly, *You make me happy; you strew me with roses.* He acts the unimpassioned philosopher, as *Wrong* did when his rival loaded him with invectives. Phidippides carries this Socratic spirit still farther; for, taking the Chorus to witness to the force of his arguments, he undertakes to prove formally to his father, that it was absolutely right for him to beat him.

The father tells the Chorus the occasion of their quarrel. He says, that when they were at table, he desired Phidippides to sing some verses of Simonides; but that he, instead of complying, laughed at that custom as being ridiculous, and declared, that Simonides was a bad poet; nay, more, that he had the insolence to prefer Euripides to Eschylus, that Euripides, who had dared to introduce incests into his tragedies*. The dispute grew high, from words they proceeded to blows; but it was the son who struck his father. Strepsiades, whose anger is redoubled at the repetition of his son's insolence, reproaches him with all the cares he had cost him in his childhood; a humorous parody of the speech made by Phenix to Achilles, in the ninth book of the *Iliad*, or rather what Euripides says in some of his tragedies, in imitation of that passage in Homer.

"I suppose, says the first speaker in the Chorus, that our gay youths are impatient to know what Phidippides has to say in defence of his proceedings." Accordingly Phidippides speaks in this manner: "What pleasure there is, says he, in learning no-

* He means the marriages introduced between brothers and sisters by the same mother: for, by the laws of Solon, brothers

and sisters by the same father, but by different mothers, were permitted to marry.

“ velties, and in being able to sport with the laws of our country !
 “ When I was wholly taken up in driving chariots and managing
 “ horses, I could not speak three words without blushing ; but
 “ since my father has cured me of that madness, and obliged me
 “ to become a philosopher, I am able to prove to him, that a son
 “ has a right to beat his father.”

The arguments, used by the young man, are accommodated to the theatre, as we may well suppose, that all the odium of such a pernicious doctrine may fall upon that taught by Socrates, as if he inculcated such notions. Phidippides, for example, says, that a father corrects his son because he loves him ; ought not a son to love his father, and to convince him that he loves him ? He adds, that old men are twice children, and are the more deserving of chastisement, as their faults are greater. In vain, says he, they urge the laws ; he who made those laws, and persuaded others to receive them, was a man, and all men have a right to become legislators. Such are the arguments which Aristophanes puts into the mouth of Phidippides, to render Socrates and his sectaries hateful to the people.

The father threatens him with the anger of Jupiter and the Gods. “ Was it not from you, says Phidippides to him, that I
 “ learned to acknowledge no other deities but the Clouds and
 “ whirl-winds ? ” The father, in the anguish of his heart, to find that his son was entirely corrupted, complains to the Clouds of the unhappiness they had brought upon him ; the Clouds reply, that he only is to blame for what had happened, by having intended to defraud his creditors.

STREPSIADES.

Why did you not warn me against such injustice ? Why did you deceive a poor simple mortal like me ?

CHORUS.

It is thus we act towards men, who, like thee, become unjust and impious. We plunge them into calamities, that they may learn, by sad experience, to fear and reverence the Gods *.

* These words are remarkable in that they prove Aristophanes to be not a profest atheist, as some writers pretend. Athens

would not have suffered him to make such a declaration unpunished.

Thus

Thus we see Strepsiades punished by the cause, the abettors, and the accomplices of his injustice, that is, by his son, the Clouds, and Socrates. He repents of having abandoned the Gods, to follow the principles of a dangerous philosophy. He implores pardon of Mercury, and pretending to be seized with a sudden enthusiasm, he orders his servants to bring hatchets, ladders, and lighted torches, mounts upon the roof of Socrates's school, and sets fire to it. Socrates and Chærephon, with a croud of philosophers, run out almost stifled with smoke, and in the utmost consternation; Strepsiades takes a ludicrous leave of them; the Clouds go off the stage, and the piece concludes abruptly, that the audience may not have an opportunity to examine too closely into the probability of this theatrical fire.

THE
W A S P S:
A
COMEDY OF ARISTOPHANES.

This Piece was represented in the ninth year of the Peloponnesian war, under the archon Aminias, during the Lenæan feasts, in the second year of the 89th Olympiad. This date is confirmed by the ancient Greek subject, by one of the scholiasts, and by Aristophanes himself, in the speech made by the Chorus to the audience.

RACINE found so much humour in this piece, that he has given it to us under the title of the *Lawyers*: but I am of opinion, that he was more pleased with the subject than with Aristophanes's manner of treating it, which he doubtless thought would not be agreeable to our manners; for as great as the difference is between our courts of justice and those of Athens, as much and more will be found between the two comedies of the *Wasps* and the *Lawyers*. It is certain, that Racine has borrowed very freely from Aristophanes; we find him making use of many of his witticisms, and many dramatic turns, and some passages he has almost wholly copied; he has caught likewise the spirit of his original, but he has not confined himself to a servile imitation of him: wiser in this than in many other imitations, where he has lulled a French audience to sleep with those very strokes of wit, which had given such diversion to Greece. However, if we examine the Greek comedy closely, we shall not fail to find where the French poet has been borrowing; and it is possible, that one may be rendered intelligible and diverting by means of the other. We lose many humorous fallies of wit in the former; for how are we to find

find out the ridicule in many Greek jests, which relate to customs in the law more than two thousand years old; customs, either obscure, or but imperfectly known to us. We do not laugh, when there is a necessity for long circumlocutions, to point out to us where we must laugh. But, notwithstanding these difficulties, which will make us lose many lively strokes in this comedy, or which will hinder us at least from feeling all the poignancy of them; yet, in the *Wasps*, we shall endeavour to shew the outlines of the *Lawyers*, and that the Greek comedy, being fuller of personal applications than the French one, on account of the great liberty the ancients took in naming the masks, it must have given full satisfaction to the malignity of the most censorious people in the world, and diverted them greatly at their own expence.

The subject of this piece consists in an ingenious fiction of a magistrate who has attended courts of justice, and heard causes, so long till he has lost his wits: he has a sensible son, who makes use of a singular expedient to cure his father of his frenzy, which is by flattering him in it. This expedient, displayed with great humour, forms an inimitable satire against that madness which was common to the magistrates, and the people, who, without troubling themselves about the consequences of a ruinous war, were wholly employed in deciding controversies at law. None but an Aristophanes, who had, as he boasts, overcome a Cleon, the most powerful and the most dangerous of all the Athenians, could have dared to censure so freely the whole republic in a comedy. Certainly, that poet was not extravagant in his own praise, when he makes the king of Persia * say, that his comedies were the school of good sense, where the Athenians might learn how to reform their errors, and to triumph over their enemies.

ACT I.

Sofias and Xanthias, two slaves who are appointed to watch Philocleon the madman, are represented in bed near his door. They are yet scarcely awake, and yawning, relate their dreams to each other. Xanthias says, that he fancied he saw a bird of prey flying towards the court of justice, with a shield between its claws,

* In his comedy of the *Acharnienses*.

which

which Cleonymus had cast away. This is one of those enigmas which the Athenians used to propose to each other at table, and, according to the poet's explanation of it, it signifies, that Cleonymus was a coward and a cheat. Sofias says, that he saw in his dream an assembly of sheep with long cloaks and canes*, and in the midst of them there was a whale, a voracious animal, who presided over the sheep, and that he had a voice like a hog. Xanthias's interpretation is, that by the whale Cleon is represented; for, says he, stopping his nose, this dream smells strong of leather.

Sofias then relates another enigmatical dream. He saw Theorus, he says, cringing to the whale, and heard Alcibiades† with his affected lisp cry out, "See, see, Theorus is metamorphosed into "a flatterer‡." In Greek a *flatterer* and a *raven* differ only in one letter, which is easily mistaken by those who speak thick. The humour is carried on upon this equivocation, which cannot be preserved in our language; and it is worth notice, that, in the compass of fifty lines, four of the chief citizens of Athens are ridiculed, namely, Cleonymus, Theorus, Cleon, and Alcibiades, which is a fine introduction to a more general satire. Then one of the slaves, turning towards the audience, gives an explanation of the subject in the manner of a prologue. He tells them, that they will not find the impertinent mirth of the Megarians§, nor the buffooneries of those poets who throw baubles¶ into the pit, to divert the audience, nor a Hercules gluttonous and a dupe, nor another satire against Euripides, or Cleon¶; but lively strokes of humour, which indeed do not merit the value the pit sets upon them, but are nevertheless of more value than a bad comedy. It was thus that Aristophanes humorously apostrophised his audience,

* He describes the old Athenians in the senate.

† It is the celebrated Alcibiades he means here.

‡ Κόραξ, raven, κολαξ, flatterer.

§ Probably the people of Megara laughed like fools, or railled unseasonably, or, perhaps, Aristophanes hints at a comedy upon the Megarians.

¶ Fruits.

¶ It is easy to know which was the first

satire against Cleon; it was the comedy of the *Knights*: and Euripides, we may suppose, had been ridiculed in some play, which has not come down to us; or that Aristophanes speaks here of those sneers which he throws out against him in the *Acharnians*, for those two pieces against Euripides which are extant, namely, the *Frogs*, and the *Feasts of Ceres*, were certainly written after the comedy of the *Wasps*.

whereas

whereas the poets of our days always take care to flatter theirs, whenever they address any speeches to them.

Xanthias next acquaints them, that Philocleon his master (that is, the friend of Cleon) is afflicted with a very uncommon disease, and that his son has ordered them to watch him day and night. "But, who, continues he, could guess what this disease is, if we did not declare it? Aminias the gamester, the son of Pronapus, calls it the rage of play; but he is mistaken. Another says, it is occasioned by drinking wine to excess; he also is mistaken." The two slaves go on with this enumeration, always at the expence of some of the Athenians, which keeps up the curiosity of the pit. At length Xanthias declares plainly, that the incurable distemper his old master labours under is, that he would be continually hearing causes; that night and day his ear is close to the clock, and his eye fixed upon the hour-glass *, as if he was in court; that his fingers are distorted by his continually supposing that he is handling the little balls, by which the suffrages are counted; that he complains, his cock has been bribed not to awake him early in the morning with crowing; or as Racine says:

*Qu'il fit couper la tête à son coq de colere,
Pour l'avoir éveillé plus tard qu'à l'ordinaire.*

These and many more instances of madness have induced his son Bdelycleon (that is, the enemy of Cleon) to have him carefully watched, for fear he should make his escape, and they are even obliged to have the doors and windows barred, so eager is the mad judge to get out.

The son enters in great haste to inform the two slaves, that his father had got into the chimney, with an intention to make his escape that way. They divert themselves a little with this new kind of smock, and then take measures to hinder the old man from going any farther. The several expedients put in practice to hinder him from going out, make a great deal of stage-business extremely diverting. "Suffer me to go to the court, cries he, otherwise that rogue Dracontides † will get off." Bdelycleon

* An hour-glass was always placed in the court, to measure the time allowed to the advocates for their pleadings.

† A famous rogue.

in vain quotes an oracle from Delphos to prevent him, in vain he uses artifice and force to keep him at home; Philocleon exclaims, swears, and tries a thousand methods to recover his liberty. It is market-day, he says, and he will go and sell his ass; the son answers, that he will sell it himself, and commands the animal to be brought to him: but apprehensive, that this is only a pretence of his father's to get out of the house, he goes himself to untie the ass, and bring it along with him, when, to his great surprise, he finds that Philocleon had fastened himself to the belly of the beast, as Ulysses had done to the Cyclop's ram*; a low piece of buffoonery, fit only to be exhibited at a fair. However, there is a proverb here worthy notice, namely, *to dispute about the shade of an ass*. It is believed, that Demosthenes was the first who gave rise to that proverb; for as he was pronouncing an oration in favour of a man whom he was desirous to preserve from punishment, and could not prevail upon the people to give him their attention, it came into his head to relate the following story to them. Some time ago, said he, as I was riding to Megara upon an ass which I had hired, the heat was so intense, that finding no trees, nor any place near me where I could be sheltered from the sun, I resolved to lye down a moment under the belly of my beast, but the driver prevented me, saying that I had not hired the shade of the ass. The dispute grew high At these words, the Athenians keeping silence, that they might hear the end of this adventure, Demosthenes, it is said, exclaimed with much eloquence upon the puerility of his auditors, reproaching them with giving that attention to a silly story of an ass, which they denied to an affair wherein the life of a man was in question.

Bdelycleon obliges his father to go in again. The old man calls Cleon and the judges to his assistance. In vain they bar up the doors and windows, he crawls like a rat up to the top of the house. His son charges the servants not to go to sleep; for, although it is scarce light, yet he is afraid that the judges, who will soon pass by in crowds, will call aloud for his father as usual. The slaves offer to drive them away with stones. "Take care what you do, says their young master, they are a choleric race, and

* In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses placed himself under the belly of a ram, to escape from the blind Cyclops.

“partake of the nature of wasps.” Here he describes, in a figurative manner, the peevish, severe, and inflexible dispositions of those old men who are soon to appear upon the stage. Their disguise itself marks their character, for instantly they fill the stage under the appearance of wasps, a monstrous masquerade, but in the true spirit of the ancient comedy, which studied as much to raise mirth by ludicrous representations as by brilliancy of wit. However, this strange spectacle of a croud of monstrous wasps, with cloaks, long canes, and all the ensigns of magistracy, could not but render the principal judges of Athens ridiculous. This Chorus, or rather the Choryphæus, animates his companions, some of whom he calls by their names, to strive courageously against the infirmities of age, and to hasten to the court to hear the process brought against Cleon by the wealthy Laches *. He adds, that Cleon would have them lay in a large stock of ill-nature, that they may not be induced to spare the criminals. He puts them in mind of their youth, when they hastened before the dawn of morning to rob the persons who sold bread. It not being yet day, their children carry lanthorns to light them along, and to warn them when they come near any dirt, that they may avoid it. The reprimands of their fathers to them, together with some blows which they give them, very naturally represent the peevishness, and sordid avarice of these old men. They now perceive that Philocleon has not joined them, and, being before his door, they will give him a serenade, they say, to waken him, because he is fond of their music. They express great surprise, that this severe judge, who used always to be at their head, is now the last in coming to the assembly; they cannot imagine the cause of his delay: has he got a fit of the gout or stone? has he lost his slipper †? or rather, is it not owing to the escape of some poor wretch whom he would have condemned, and who, to save himself, intended to have discovered to the republic the secret snares of the Samians ‡? However they console him

* An Athenian general, who had commanded in Sicily.

† An allusion to some ludicrous accident.

‡ Probably this Carylton eluded some sentence that was going to be past against him, by discovering to the Athenians the secret correspondence carried on by the Samians

Vol. III.

with Persia, during the administration of Pericles. Samos and Miletus were at war for the city of Priene; the Samians had the advantage, but the Athenians insisted, that both parties should submit to their arbitration, and cited them before their tribunal. The Samians refused to obey; upon which

M m

Pericles

him with the hope of being soon to sit in judgment on another criminal, who had betrayed Thrace. Probably the poet here means Cleon, who was then at the head of the Athenian troops, and who was killed the following year at Amphipolis.

It is easy to see that Racine has borrowed a good deal from this first act: his *Lawyer* is possessed with the same kind of frenzy, the same methods are used to guard him. But Aristophanes has fallen more into farce. Those personal strokes, which contributed so greatly to the diversion of the Athenian audience, have no charms for us, so that it is very difficult to compare these two pieces together: for although the plan is the same, yet in the manner, and the turn, there is as great a difference, as between Athens, and Paris.

ACT II.

Philocleon answers the Chorus through the chinks of his door. He says, that he has long heard the pleasing concert made by his brethren, but that he is so unhappy as not to be able to join his voice with theirs, nor to go along with them to the court to pass sentence on some trembling wretch. He implores Mercury to transform him into ashes, or smoke, that he may mix with the air, and escape out of his confinement; or rather that he would metamorphose him into a little black stone, by which he might serve to condemn one of the parties. He informs the Chorus, that he is held in this miserable captivity by his son; and intreats the old men to speak softly, lest they should awake that dreadful goaler, who yet seeks to do him no other harm than to force him, in spite

Pericles was sent to chastise them, who abolished the government of the nobles, and obliged them to give him fifty of their principal citizens for hostages, with as many children. The Samians found means to recover these hostages, and revolted. Pericles was sent against them a second time, and a battle was fought near the island *Tragia*. Pericles blocked up their city, but committed a great fault by retiring too soon. His lieutenant was attacked: the Samians gained the victory, took a great many Athenians prisoners; and in return for the insults they had received from them on another occasion, when the Athenians marked the foreheads

of the Samian prisoners with the figure of a Samian bark, the latter marked their captives with the figure of an owl, which was the common stamp of the Athenian money. Aristophanes alludes to this injurious treatment of the Samians, when he says:

The Samians are learned men.

Plutarch, transl. by Amyot.

Plutarch adds, that Pericles was accused of having decreed the war against the Samians in favour of the people of Miletus, at the request of Aspasia, who was a Milesian. At length, he took Samos, and destroyed its fortifications.

of

of himself, to live happy, without hearing causes, as if it was possible for him to be happy without being a judge. There is here a stroke of satire against Cleon; for the frantic judge declares, that his son has engaged in a conspiracy with Cleon, to overthrow the popular government. The Chorus consider among themselves upon some stratagem, to deliver their friend from his confinement; but he is so strictly watched, that they find it impossible; and Philocleon, although he had the artifice of Ulysses, cannot escape. At the mention of Ulysses, the old men remind him of his happy invention in his youth, when he imitated the various artifices of the king of Ithaca, by dexterously flying from punishment, and leaping the walls. This is the second time, that these subtle nocturnal exploits are attributed to the youth of Athens. To which Philocleon replies, that he was then young, and able to scale walls; but that happy time is over: and besides that, there is a watchful centry placed over him, who never quits him a moment. Being now reduced to nibble the grates of his windows, and afterwards to descend by a cord: the business of the stage becomes quite farcical, as well as the humour; of which this stroke may be excepted, which the prisoner addresses to the Chorus: "But if I should break my neck, my dear friends, says he, I conjure you, bury me in the court of justice."

Bdelycleon, awakened by the noise, runs out, and finds his father hanging by a rope, with which he had endeavoured to let himself down. He prepares, with the assistance of his servants, to force him back to his apartment: but the Chorus of Wasps exert themselves in defence of the old judge, they dispatch a messenger for Cleon, flourish their sticks, and threaten so loudly, that Bdelycleon is obliged to come out with his servants, to endeavour to bring them to reason. The Wasps grow furious, they fall upon him and his men with their sticks; all this is accompanied with several jests upon the magistrates and judges. A ludicrous struggle ensues between the Wasps and the slaves, each party endeavouring to carry off Philocleon; a great number of satirical hints are thrown out, which make all the poignancy of this scene. Theorus is described as an impious wretch, an adulterer, who had raised himself to the government by despicable artifices, him the Wasps call to their assistance. They mention Philip, the son of Gorgias, as being a victim to the Wasp-judges. They play upon the name of *Dracontides*, which was given to king Cecrops, when he was changed into a dragon; upon Eschines, compared to smoke;

upon the poet Philocles, and his harsh verses; upon Amyntas, and his boundless ambition; and lastly, upon Bdelycleon himself, whom the Chorus charge with being a tyrant, an enemy to Athens, and a friend to Lacedæmon, because he rebels against the judges, and hinders his father from attending the courts of justice *.

Bdelycleon, enraged at this reproach, gives them back the detested name of tyrant, and proves, that they merit it better than him, they who assume to themselves the power of judging arbitrarily in the most trifling cases; they who had rendered the reproach of tyranny and conspiracy so common, that it was well known for many years, nothing was more frequent, even in the very markets, when any one purchased a delicate sort of fish, than to say, that man has a design to raise himself to the tyranny. "And I, adds he, because I would procure my father a happy life, like that of the poet Morichus †, free and independant of those vermin ‡ who plague the lawyers, am called a conspirator, and a tyrant." Philocleon replies, that each man has his particular taste; but that, for his part, he thinks happiness is no where to be found but in a court of justice; and, that he is fonder of a ragout of law-suits, than of the most delicious viands. His son offers to demonstrate to him, that he has mistaken his happiness, and that he is no better than a slave.

PHILOCLEON.

How! a slave, dost thou say; why, I think I am as great as a king.

BDELYCLEON.

Yes, a theatrical king. But, I beseech thee, tell me, father, what revenues hast thou from this imaginary kingdom?

PHILOCLEON.

Oh, immense sums, as these gentlemen can witness. Let them be arbitrators in the dispute.

BDELYCLEON.

Well, I consent to it. Give my father his liberty. If I lose my cause, you shall give me a sword, and I will instantly run it through

* The Chorus charge the young man with being a friend to the Lacedæmonians, because he wears a long beard like them; the Spartans never shaved their beards.

† A writer of tragedies, and a great lover

of the pleasures of the table.

‡ Aristophanes expresses this by a word of fourteen syllables. He has many more of these humorous terms, in which Plautus has imitated him.

my body: but to what punishment will you condemn yourself, if I prove you to be in the wrong?

PHILOCLEON.

Never to drink, nor to sit in judgment more.

The Chorus, pleased at being constituted judges of this dispute, exhort their companion to defend the common cause with vigour; and they consent to become the jest of all Athens, if Philocleon is overcome.

ACT III.

Philocleon begins his arguments, and his son takes out his pocket-book to write down the chief and most singular points on which he insists. The father endeavours to prove, that a judge is in every respect as great as a king; no sovereignty can be more absolute, no felicity greater, no grandeur more alluring, than that of an old magistrate. Scarce has he reached the tribunal when he sees himself attended by lictors of four cubits. "Then, continues he, the
" greatest man in the state presents to me that hand which has
" robbed the people, and, falling at my feet, cries with a suppliant voice, Have compassion on me, oh father! if ever thou
" hast been in the like extremity. Well then, if I did not plead
" for these wretches, would they pay me the least regard?"

BDELICLEON.

Clients, very well; I will set down that in my pocket-book.

PHILOCLEON.

When I leave the court, I forget all my promises; then I receive the humble supplications of those who want to elude a sentence; and what arts do they use to gain over a judge? Some confide to us their infirmities, which they aggravate in order to make them equal to ours: others endeavour to divert us, by repeating some passages out of Æsop the comedian; and some try to relax the severity of our looks by witty jests. If all this does not prevail, they bring their wives and children to us, who endeavour to move our compassion by tears and cries, while their husbands, or fathers, tremble, and pay us adoration as if we were gods, in hopes of obtaining our favour - - - - Is not this to reign?

BDELYCLEON.

I shall set this down also.

Philocleon,

Philocleon, to these advantages, add that of having the actor Oeagre, or some player on the flute, each of whom, to express his acknowledgements to his judge, exerts his talent of pleasing; one repeats a beautiful passage from his Niobe, the other plays some fine piece of music.

He then names another more solid advantage, or rather a piece of villainy, with which Aristophanes charges the Athenian magistrates. "If a father dies, says Philocleon, and leaves a large estate, his last will is confided to us; we open it, and without paying any regard to his intentions, we give his daughter in marriage to the man who has most skill in the art of persuasion (that is, who bribes highest); and this is a privilege no sovereign prince can boast of. When the senate and the people are divided in their opinions, in any affair of importance, as concerning the sentence that is to be past on any criminal, for example, it is to the decision of us old magistrates that the matter in dispute is left: then we have the satisfaction to hear a cheating Evathlus*, and a cowardly cringing Cleonymus, assure us, that they are entirely devoted to us, and are solicitous for nothing but the public good. In short, no affair of any consequence is debated in the assembly of the people, which has not been first discussed before our tribunal; and it is we who in reality issue out all decrees. Add to this, that Cleon, with his thundering voice, is so far from daring to contradict us, that he complaisantly drives away the flies which are troublesome to us; that Theorus, who is not exceeded by Euphemius in fawning, does not disdain to take a sponge and wipe off the dust from our shoes. Wouldst thou do as much for thy father? Are these blessings to be despised? And can any one, who enjoys them, be a slave as thou hast presumed to assert? - - - But I forgot to name one advantage which is far greater and more pleasing than all those I have enumerated; it is the reception I meet with from my family when I return from the court with my three oboles."

Here he humorously describes the manner in which his wife and his daughters receive him, when they behold these three oboles; how one hastens to wash his feet, another to prepare some refreshments for him, while a third *fondles* and *caresses* him. At length,

* As these words are pronounced, it seems probable, that the player imitates the action of a man who counts out money.

Philocleon concludes his speech with declaring, that there is no judge but what is dreaded and courted; that he finds this in his own house; and that Jupiter himself is not more a monarch than he is. All these particulars, and others which we have yet to observe, give a lively idea of the magistracy of Athens; and we ought not to pass over slightly any of those strokes which characterise such a people as the Athenians were.

The Chorus of Wasps declare, that they are charmed with the eloquence of their companion. He exults upon this praise, and anticipates his triumph, as if his son had nothing to say in answer to such arguments.

The son begins his speech with declaring, that it is no easy matter to cure such an inveterate disease, as that with which the Athenians and his father are afflicted. He then proceeds to facts. By his calculation, the money which comes in yearly to the public treasury is two thousand talents: he next considers, how much of this money is given to the six thousand judges, reckoning three oboles a head each day, without taking in the days of vacation, and finds that the annual sum paid to them amounts to no more than a hundred and fifty talents; therefore, Philocleon is obliged to acknowledge, that the judges do not receive the tenth part of the public treasure. The rest of the calculation is easily made: for the judges are paid * only for ten months in the year, in the two other months all judicial business being prohibited. Thus three oboles a piece to six thousand men make fifteen talents a month, which amount to a hundred and fifty talents for ten months; and this agrees perfectly with the valuation of the Attic coin; for a talent was worth sixty minas, and a mina a hundred drachmas; a talent, therefore, was six thousand drachmas, and each of the six thousand judges received three oboles, or a half drachma, every day the courts of justice were held; from whence it appears, that these courts were held every day during ten months of the year.

We must observe, that Aristophanes, by making this calculation, intends to expose the bad government of the estate, which expended a tenth of its revenues, in paying for the administration of

* Their festival days made up at least two months, probably without reckoning those on which they transacted judicial affairs, either through ignorance, or wilfully,

as Aristophanes, in his *Clouds*, reproaches the Athenians. This calculation of the number of their festivals is taken from the scholiast.

justice, which ought to be *gratis*. Secondly, that it is to ridicule the avarice of the judges, who so eagerly grasped at a gratuity, which, though a considerable sum to the state in the whole, was but a trifle when divided among six thousand men, since what each judge had for his share amounted to no more than a hundred and fifty drachmas a year *, supposing he attended the court every day. Thirdly, he levels his satire at the exorbitant number of judges in Athens: and lastly, it falls upon Cleon, who was the first that proposed to augment this gratuity with one obole a day more.

Bdelycleon, still supposing that the hundred and fifty talents paid out of the public treasury is but a trifling sum, asks his father humorously, "into whose hands the remainder of the two thousand talents go?"

PHILOCLEON.

Whose? why, into those of certain persons who - - - But let us not reveal the infamy of Athens; let us be always on the side of the people.

He means here by the robbers of the public, those who stand up for the rights of the people, and who flatter and betray them like Cleon; and, in general, these robbers were the orators, and such as were employed in the government of the state, or at the head of the armies. It seldom happened, that they acted honestly when they had opportunities of enriching themselves by their influence over the people, or by the employments with which they were entrusted. Bdelycleon, therefore, makes his father sensible, that it was to these men that the old judges were dupes and slaves; for while the former, by making themselves formidable to the city and their fellow-citizens, drew from them large sums, abject submissions, and innumerable presents, the latter lose all their credit with the Greeks, and are rewarded only with the leavings of those gentlemen, that is to say, with three oboles a day; and that poor sum they forfeited, unless they came early to the court; for after the signal had been given, there was no longer any entrance, and consequently no oboles, while the son of Chares, a young orator,

* According to the most probable estimate, the talent was valued at one thousand crowns, the mina at fifty livres, the drachma at ten sols, &c. It is easy, therefore, to con-

clude, that the judge, who was most constant in his attendance, gained only seventy-five livres a year.

is respectfully introduced, and rewarded with a drachma for pleading a cause; and if he receives a present from some rich rogue, to extricate him from the danger with which he is threatened, he shares it with the principal magistrates, so that all shut their eyes upon the injustice, and the criminal gets clear off, while the poor judge is obliged to make his court to the treasurer to be paid his three oboles, without perceiving the practices of those artful gentlemen.

Such are the arguments of Bdelycleon; and his father, astonished to hear of these iniquitous dealings, which till now he had been ignorant of, begins to apprehend that it is possible he may be more a slave than a king. His son then goes on to prove to him, that it is the interest of the great men in Athens to keep the judges and the people in poverty and subjection; that they flatter them only to procure the title of their benefactors, as Cleon had done; and that in the mean time they exhaust the city with imposts, which were more than sufficient to subsist the people with the same magnificence, as was done in the time of the victories at Marathon. What Bdelycleon supposes here, is worthy notice: he says, that if the thousand borough-towns, or dependencies of Athens, would each undertake to maintain only twenty men, twenty thousand men would be subsisted at a small expence; whereas the whole people suffered great want, notwithstanding the immense revenues which were drawn from those places.

Bdelycleon concludes with asserting, that if these robbers of the public should be apprehensive of being called to account for their wicked administration, they would not fail to promise the people all the revenues of Eubœa, and fifty large measures of corn to each citizen, but would give no more than five. The poet here alludes to an attempt which had been made the preceding year upon Eubœa, and to a distribution of a great quantity of corn, which three and twenty years before had been sent by Psammethichus, king of Lybia, to the Athenians, in a time of scarcity. The distribution of this corn was made very sparingly, and not till after the strangers, 4760 in number, were separated from the citizens, of whom there was 14240. Bdelycleon, therefore, adds, that, at the time of this shocking distribution, his father would have found some difficulty in getting himself acknowledged for a citizen. "It is for these reasons, continues he, that I am determined to keep thee confined to thine own house; I will take care to maintain

" thee, and hinder thee from exposing thyself to the derision of
 " those unmeaning promisers. Again I repeat it, father, I will
 " take upon myself the care of providing thee with every thing
 " thou desirest, except those three oboles which fit so near thy
 " heart." Aristophanes must certainly have been very sure of
 pleasing the people, that he durst venture thus to unfold this mystery
 of the past and present government of the state.

Although the Chorus had been extremely prejudiced against
 Bdelycleon, yet, overcome by the strength of his arguments, they
 cannot help wishing they had so good a guardian of the state. The
 father, having nothing to urge against the conduct of a son so wise
 and generous, and whose pleas were assented to by the arbiters
 themselves, sighs, hesitates; at length, habitude prevails over rea-
 son, " How! cries he, shall I never more sit in judgment in the
 " court? Hence with your soothing promises! I am not to be won
 " by them; I would rather hear the usher cry: *Whoever has not*
 " *yet given his suffrage, let him rise.* Yes, I own it I languish after
 " the urn, and I am at the height of my wishes when I put in
 " my suffrage last of all *. But, let me try to recover my dissi-
 " pated spirits; I am so confounded, that, were I in the court it-
 " self, I should scarce be able to convict Cleon of injustice."

The son, finding it impossible to prevail with his father, who
 is as obstinate as the *Dandin* of Racine, conceives a stratagem,
 which we find in the comedy of the *Lawyers* †:

LEANDRE.

Hé doucement.

Mon pere, il faut trouver quelque accommodement.

Si pour vous sans juger la vie est un supplice,

Si vous êtes pressé de rendre la justice,

Il ne faut point sortir pour cela de chez vous :

Exercez le talent, & jugez parmi nous, &c.

This scene is copied from Aristophanes. However, in the Greek
 comedy there are some strokes which express the old man's fond-
 ness, or rather passion for hearing causes, with more liveliness and
 spirit than in the French. Philocleon, having consented to play

* This is a parody of the Bellerophon of Euripides.

† Act iii. sc. 12.

the judge at home, requires all the ceremonies and apparatus of a court of justice; and his son promises him a great many ludicrous advantages, which he could not have there; as, for example, that he shall warm himself, eat when he is hungry, and the like, while he is hearing causes. Philocleon also insists upon having a statue or figure of Lycus set up. This Lycus * was one of the sons of Pandion, who resembled a wolf. His image was placed in the court of justice, and the judges, ten at a time, ranged themselves round this statue, and then waited for the bribes that used to be given them. The custom of surrounding Lycus for this purpose, passed into a proverb.

Scarce has the old judge completed his design in making his domestic tribunal an exact copy of the public one, and demanded a sacrifice, as usual, in order to inspect the entrails of the victim, when the servants are heard to cry out, as in Racine's comedy †, and enter pursuing a dog who has stolen a cheese.

PETIT-JEAN.

*Tout est perdu . . . Citron . . .
 Votre chien . . . vient là bas de manger un chapon.
 Rien n'est sûr devant lui, ce qu'il trouve il l'emporte ‡. &c.*

Here we have the thought of Aristophanes: but the Greek poet has pushed it much farther than his French imitator. Racine has recourse to an episode, in compliance with our taste; but Aristophanes fills up the rest of his comedy with this ridiculous trial; which must certainly have proved a pleasing entertainment to the Athenians, by the poet's frequent allusions to all the formalities used by the Athenian court of judicature upon the most inconsiderable trifles.

* Suidas.

† The *Lawyers*, act ii. sc. 14.

‡ Racine seems to have imitated Aristophanes, even in his parodies: for, in this verse, the French poet parodies one of the most beautiful passages of Malherbe, in the ode to Henry IV. upon his expedition against Sedan.

*Tel qu'à vagues épanchues
 Marche un fleuve impétueux*

*De qui les neiges fondues
 Rendent le cours furieux.
 Rien n'est sûr en son rivage
 Ce qu'il trouve il le ravage,
 Et traînant comme bûissons
 Les chênes & leurs racines
 Ote aux campagnes voisines
 L'espérance des moissons, &c.*

The preparations for the trial are made with many ludicrous ceremonies. Books are brought for taking down notes, urns for the suffrages, branches of myrtle, incense and fire, and all things which give room for strokes of wit and humour suitable to that age. They invoke the Gods: but this is a severe satire; for they implore them to inspire Philocleon, or rather all the Athenian judges, whom he represents, with a spirit of gentleness and mercy towards the unhappy criminals, upon whom he sits in judgment, that he may not be so ready to condemn them, and to enjoy their groans and despair.

After this ceremony, Bdelycleon summons the judges, threatening to admit no one after the trial is begun. The *Thefmothetes* *, or the servant who represents that magistrate, begins in this manner: "Hear the crime of which the Cidathenian † cur accuses the Exonian dog, whose name is Labes. The question is about a Sicilian cheese which had been purloined; the punishment reaches only to a whipping."

These dogs, whose different countries are mentioned, were in reality two lawyers whom the poet had in view, and who were well known to the spectators. Under the name of Labes he represents Laches, a troublesome busy man in the state, as has been said elsewhere; who, having had the command of the troops that were sent into Sicily, suffered himself to be bribed by a present of cheeses. The dog, who is the accuser, may possibly mean Aristophanes himself, who was a Cidathenian. However, with this key to the allegory, we may pardon the poet a thousand jests, which would have no poignancy without it, and which indeed have none with it to us, because we have lost the traces of many circumstances and little particulars, in which the humour of these passages consist. Racine had not the same advantages as Aristophanes. The criminal in the *Lawyers* was nothing more than a dog; and doubtless this gave occasion for those severe censures which were passed on this piece, although it gave great diversion both to the city and the court ‡. The whole humour of the *Lawyers* consists in the

* The magistrates, who were called *Thefmothetes* (a name which intimates the power of making laws), took cognizance of complaints and accusations; they made their report concerning these sort of affairs: but

their principal office was, annually to review the laws, and to correct them, as occasion required, by proper interpretations.

† Cidathena, Exona, boroughs of Attica.

‡ See Racine's preface.

frenzy of a gentleman of the long robe, who will play the judge in his own house: the Hypochondriac of Moliere contrives to be made a doctor that he may give physic to himself; whereas that of the *Wasps* consists not only in this ridiculous frenzy, but in the allegorical process carried on by the two dogs.

Notwithstanding this duplicity of objects, under which some mysterious niceties are concealed, it would not be a pleasing task to examine this scene verse after verse; where a dog barks and talks; where the judge eats and drinks, while he is acting in his office; where the witnesses are kitchen utensils; in a word, where all is puerile, and in a strain of the lowest humour. There is one remarkable stroke here, when the advocate for the dog, who is the prosecutor, exaggerates the enormity of the theft (a cheese, and a Sicilian cheese!) this fact appears the more atrocious to Philocleon, as the robber had not shared his gains with his judge: a most shocking injustice! There are also many more indirect hints thrown out, which shew plainly that Laches is satirized here, and that this general had made great advantage of his expedition to Sicily. Hereupon Philocleon declares the fact to be so atrocious, that he proceeds to pronounce sentence without hearing what the criminal has to urge in his own defence, who, as the judge says, makes no answer, but remains mute like Thucydides. It is not the historian who is meant here, but another Thucydides, the son of Milesias, a man who acted a considerable part in Athens, in the time of Pericles, whose declared enemy he was. He had been accused of treason, and, because he made no defence, he was banished by the ostracism.

Bdelycleon, that the proceedings may be carried on with the more regularity, and to prevent the accused from being condemned unheard, undertakes the dog's defence, and probably imitates some pleader then in fashion. This whole scene is in the same taste with that in the *Lawyers* of Racine, except that he does not run away from the purpose, which was not usual with the Athenian orators. At last the accused bitch's puppies are brought in to move the compassion of the judge, as in the *Lawyers*: he pretends to be softened; but when they proceed to take the suffrages, he asks for the urn of condemnation*. They give him one for the other; so that he acquits the criminal while he supposes he has condemned him.

* There were two urns, one for receiving the favourable votes, the other for the contrary.

The relentless old man, when he discovers his mistake, is ready to faint with surprise and grief. To have acquitted an accused person, is a stain upon his character, which he is not able to endure. He implores pardon of the Gods for this weakness: and this puts the last hand to this ridiculous scene, which falls directly upon the cruelty of the Athenian judges. Mean time his son intreats him to retire. "Come, says he, I will take care to divert thee with all kinds of amusement: thou shalt go to feasts, to dances, to the theatre. Lay aside the business of trials, and be no longer a dupe to Hyperbolus."

Here the Chorus make their usual digression, or speech to the audience, intreating them, not to take all this comedy in a bad sense: afterwards, speaking freely in favour of the poet, they say, that Aristophanes, instead of entertaining any resentment against that assembly *, had consecrated his labours to the amusement of the Greeks, and had even given his pieces to others to exhibit; he who so far from making his court to any person whatever, or from sparing ridiculous characters, had appeared upon the stage to attack the most powerful man in the state; that man with the voice of a torrent, that monster before whom all Athens trembled, who could neither corrupt him by presents, nor restrain him by threats, in a word, the formidable Cleon †. Aristophanes arrogates to himself the highest degree of courage; he will dare every danger for the people, who nevertheless did not, the *preceding year*, relish his comedy of the *Clouds*, one of the best of his pieces, in the poet's opinion. This passage fully confirms the scholiast, and the ancient writer of the Greek preface, who fix the date of the *Wasps* to a year after that of the *Clouds*, as we have shewn.

In the remaining part of this discourse, which, like others of the same kind, take different names, not very necessary to be known, the Chorus give a reason for this masquerade. The old men are represented as wasps to express the eagerness of the Athenians, to defend themselves against such enemies as have dared to attack their hive. Persia has experienced their courage, and felt to her cost the danger of provoking them. This first comparison is very

* On account of the unfavourable reception given to his *Clouds* the year before. Schol.

† The poet compares himself to Hercules, who, not satisfied with conquering men, at-

tacked the most formidable monsters; and indeed he every where mentions his attack of Cleon as one of the boldest exploits imaginable.

honourable for the Athenians, but that which follows seems a little satirical. The republic, say the Chorus, is a swarm, the people are like wasps easily provoked; like wasps the Athenians have their works and employments: part make their court to the archon, part attach themselves to the tribunal of the eleven*; some fly to the courts of justice, others crawl like worms into the city to go to their tribunal: for, according to Aristophanes, Athens was but one tribunal; and indeed there were but too many. Lastly, say they, there are drones who live upon the labours of others; he means the orators, and those who are always engaged in cabals, such as Cleon; and thus completes his comparison of the Athenians with a swarm of wasps.

A C T IV.

Philocleon having consented to quit his former way of life, and resign himself up entirely to the management of his son, the latter intreats his father to lay aside his old judge's cloak, to wear a more suitable habit, and conform to the manners of other persons of his rank. This is a scene formed for exhibition, enlivened by pleasantries, of which the nice design, whether good or bad, is difficult to be discovered. It is the same with some stories related by the old man, exercising himself in the manners of polite persons. Here the ridicule falls upon those who aspire to the fame of being good story-tellers, and of enlivening conversation with smart repartees, who, as we shall find in the sequel, made profession of that kind of excellence. Philocleon's stories are made up of allusions, and strongly tinged with the manners of the bar, which he cannot get rid of. His son explains to him the methods he must use to acquire the character of a polite and agreeable man at table, and feigns that the guests expected to their entertainment are Theorus, Eschinus, Phanus, Cleon, and Acesterus a very bad tragic poet. He, therefore, exhorts his father to sing some verses worthy of them, and begins himself; which gives occasion for some satirical strokes against Cleon, Theorus, and the rest of the supposed guests. The father and son retire, as if to go to the feast, and the Chorus, who remain on the stage, fall severely on the character of Amynias, either the archon, or the other Amynias we have mentioned before.

† The tribunal of the eleven was composed of eleven magistrates, whose business it particularly was to take cognizance of robberies, thefts, and crimes of every kind.

They

They inveigh against the luxurious table kept by the wealthy Leogoras; against the sordid disposition of Antiphon, who in other respects was so great a man; against Automenus, and his three sons; and lastly, against Cleon. Affected elegance, rapacity, and the most horrible licentiousness, are the strokes which he gives them as he passes. Racine has taken nothing from this act, or the following; his judge preserves his frenzy to the end of the play, whereas Aristophanes, in the two last acts of his comedy, makes him change his manners and way of life, and from a grave solemn magistrate become a wild debauchee.

A C T V.

Bdelycleon is punished for his endeavouring to cure his father of his frantic passion for hearing causes, by another much more odious. He becomes a drunkard; and the business of this whole act is, to represent a drunken old man, in colours which will not bear a close examination. A slave comes out, bearing the marks of the blows he has received, to inform the Chorus of the shameful condition in which he has left his master, and relates all that had passed during the entertainment, at which Ippylus, Antiphon, Lycon, Lysistratus, Theophrastes, and Phrynichus, were present, all of them, according to Aristophanes, poor indigent wretches. He tells them, in what manner Philocleon had abused every person he met. In vain did his son endeavour to bring him back to reason; the father repeated all the arguments he had before used to him to persuade him to spend his time merrily. Philocleon enters, followed by several persons whom he had affronted, who insist upon his giving them satisfaction. Euripides is of this number; but Philocleon laughs at them all, and extricates himself out of this difficulty like a coward. This is an incident which Aristophanes makes use of to ridicule the youth of Athens more humorously, by ascribing all their impertinencies to an old man, who assumes their manners, so far as even to dance in the streets. It would be an offence to decency to say any more of this closing scene; nothing useful can be drawn from it, and many of the satirical strokes in it are so obscure, that, to us, they are become enigmas, particularly those against the tragic poets.

P E A C E :

P E A C E,

A

COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Acted in the City the 13th Year of the Peloponnesian War, the 1st of the 90th Olympiad, during the Dionysial Festivals in the Spring; Astipbilus being Archon.

THIS piece is nearly of the same nature and same subject as that of the Acharnians, but it is still more full of ænigmas, metaphors, and figures of all sorts. These, and other reasons will not permit all of it to be considered. There are certain pieces of Aristophanes which should be passed over with as much rapidity as a swallow skims the water, being mere buffooneries, of which the allusions are obscure, or do not deserve to be thoroughly examined. As for the date, it is not to be doubted, since the poet himself fixes it to the 13th year of the Peloponnesian war, when the Athenians, after some considerable misfortunes, had cause to be extremely tired of it, notwithstanding their haughtiness. Mr. Samuel Petit does not deserve to be attended to, when he affirms, without any proof, that the manner of counting the years of the Peloponnesian war is different in Aristophanes and Thucydides. All the turns which we shall see in the poet concur with those of the historian at the same epoch. One verse, where an Iolian spectator is described, shews that there were strangers at that play; and consequently that it was acted during the Dionysial festivals in the city.

The design of Aristophanes is to disgust the Athenians more and more against a ruinous war, and to inspire them with the love of peace, as much to be desired by the conquerors as the conquered; after many years had been spent in a war equally fatal to the one and to the other, and capable of ruining all Greece.

It is proper to remind the reader of a point of history very essential in the composition of this play, which is, the death of Cleon and Brasidas: the former was general of the Athenians, the latter of the Lacedemonians. Both these generals had their reasons for prolonging the war. Brasidas, an ambitious man, but brave, enterprising, and successful, found his account in making himself necessary. The glory and success of his arms supported his ambition, and furnished him with reasons for maintaining an authority more agreeable to himself than useful to his country. Cleon, on his part, less an officer than a man of intrigue, could not lay down his arms without exposing himself; nor consent to a peace without his own ruin. The Athenians would have had leisure to observe his violences, and would in no wise have spared him. Both of them were victims to their love of war. They were slain in Thrace in a journey to Amphipolis. Cleon made an ill contrived retreat; Brasidas took his advantage of that imprudence; but both the one and the other fell: the former in his defeat, the latter in the midst of his victory. Those two generals being dead, in the tenth year of the war, there seemed to be no longer any obstacle to the peace; at least it is thus that Aristophanes speaks of it in this play, and Thucydides in the 5th book of his history. In short, Sparta and Athens made a separate treaty, which was the famous truce of fifty years; but the Peloponnesian war did not end there; it was too strongly lighted up, and the end of it was not yet come.

A C T I.

Two slaves and a beetle of enormous size are the first personages that are presented. The slaves are extremely discontented with their employment, which is to nourish the dirty animal with such food as is proper for him, by order of their master, whom they treat like an old fool, or a man disordered in his senses; who takes it into his head to go to heaven mounted on the back of this animal, as Bellerophon upon Pegasus. There is in this act, and in the whole piece, an allusion to the tragedy of Bellerophon by Euripides; as also to the orators, whose impure mouths vomit calumnies, and subsist by them; and to the infamous practices of Cleon.

What should we suppose to be in it besides this, or why should we make any supposition about it? The whole is allusion: but it signifies very little to us, that the enigma is always obscure in the low drollery which prevails in several parts of this piece.

The

The master appears: he is a * vine-dresser, named Trygæus. He complains as usual to Jupiter of his cruelty in suffering Greece to waste itself by war. One of the servants, after having told the audience that his master had been very near breaking his neck, by endeavouring to scale heaven, goes softly to watch him, and perceives him flying in the air, upon the back of his beetle.

Trygæus really appears upon that comical machine, with the air of a poet who animates and moderates his Pegasus. In vain his servant roars out to him. All that he can get from him is, that he is going to summons Jupiter to be more favourable to the Greeks; otherwise he will accuse him of being a traitor to Greece. The slave calls his master's children: they all assemble together, and seeing their father lifted up in the air, they endeavour to stop his flight: the same answer is given to the children as to the servant; I am going (says the father) to make your fortune. But what a vehicle is a beetle! Trygæus lets them see that they know nothing of the matter. He alledges the fable of Esop, who says, that it is the only winged animal that ever reached the throne of Jupiter. It is a fable which is to be seen in La Fontaine †, where the eagle is feigned to have surpris'd a rabbit as he squatted on the hole of a beetle, who implored him to shew mercy; but the eagle, without regarding him, made his prey of the rabbit. The beetle, to revenge himself upon the eagle, broke her eggs twice; the third time the eagle having laid her eggs in Jupiter's bosom, the beetle dropt his dung upon his robe, and Jupiter endeavouring to shake it off, accidentally threw down the eggs and broke them.

At last the children of Trygæus intreat their father at least not to furnish Euripides with a subject for a tragedy by a fatal fall. He bids them adieu by a buffoonery, and afterwards speaks to his Hypogryph, as Achilles to his horses in Homer; or rather in a too despicable stile, to make a parody with Homer as he does with Euripides. At last he meets Mercury, who begins to call him scoundrel, rogue, wretch; he afterwards asks him what his name is?

TRYGÆUS.

You rascal.

MERCURY.

What country-man are you?

* His name is suited to his trade. † La Fontaine, Fable 30. The Eagle and Beetle.

P E A C E.

T R Y G Æ U S.

You rogue you.

M E R C U R Y.

Whose son are you?

T R Y G Æ U S.

O the wretch!

M E R C U R Y.

If you do not tell me your name instantly, I'll beat your brains out.

T R Y G Æ U S:

I am Trygæus, an Athmonian*, a pretty good vine-dresser, no informer, and have little relish for intrigues.

M E R C U R Y,

What are you come here for?

T R Y G Æ U S.

To bring you this dish of meat.

M E R C U R Y.

Mercury receives the present, and Trygæus adds, "You see I am not such an ill-natured devil: pray, can you procure me an audience of Jupiter?"

Mercury lets him know that Jupiter and the other Gods are a great way off; that they have climbed up to the very top of heaven; that as for him, he had been left to take care of the baggage and the celestial dishes; that the Gods had removed themselves because of their hatred for the Greeks; and that they might no longer hear their prayers: that they had lodged in their place, War, as a Goddess to whose caprice they had delivered up Greece: that the reason of the anger of the Gods was, because the Athenians having their choice of war or peace, had preferred the former: "For, says he, if the Lacedemonians seemed to have the best of it, they cried, by Castor and Pollux† the Athenians shall pay for it. If the Athenians, in their turn, had gained any advantage, as soon as they saw an ambassador from Lacedemon arrive to treat about a

* From Athmonia, a town of Attica. † A common oath among the Lacedemonians, because Castor and Pollux were of their country.

"peace, by Jupiter and Minerva*, say they, they have sent this fellow to amuse us; let us not give credit to them: if once we get Pyle†, they come to us again. This is your talk; so that I know not whether you will ever see peace again.

TRYGÆUS.

Where has she hid herself?

MERCURY, *shewing a cave.*

War has confined her to that monstrous deep cavern.

TRYGÆUS.

To which?

MERCURY.

That lower one: do not you see those enormous stones with which she has blocked up the entry, to hinder the Greeks from fetching out Peace?

TRYGÆUS.

Pray can you tell me what is the intention of that cruel divinity?

MERCURY.

All that I know is, that last night she brought out a mortar-piece of a prodigious size.

TRYGÆUS.

And, pray what does she intend to do with that mortar-piece?

MERCURY.

Bruise all the cities of Greece to a mummy. Adieu, I must retire, hark I hear her; what a terrible din!

TRYGÆUS.

Alas for me! I hear her but too well; where shall I hide myself‡?

Enter WAR, with a mortar.

Deplorable mortals, how I shall make you suffer!

* The usual oath of the Athenians. The Athenian women swore by the two Goddesses Ceres and Proserpine. They were mistaken who believed that the Athenians swore by Castor and Pollux.

† Pyle was the bone of contention between the Athenians and the Lacedemonians, both of them being neighbours to that

city. We must here recollect the affair of Demosthenes and Cleon, which is so much taken notice of in the city. There were several negotiations about Pyle. The Lacedemonians were always sent back.

‡ He appears upon the stage dismounted from his beetle.

TRY-

TRYGÆUS.

O Apollo, what a monster!

W A R.

O ten times unhappy Præfæa*! there is an end of thee. [*She feigns to throw that town into the mortar; and throws in a leek, from whence the name of it is taken.*]

TRYGÆUS, to the spectators.

Courage, gentlemen, this has nothing to do with us. That curse is only for Lacedemon.

W A R.

O Megara, Megara! you shall be kneaded like a piece of dough. [*The monster puts some garlic in the mortar. Megara was fertile in garlic: Lacedemon supported it, and that was the principal cause of the war of Peloponnesus.*]

TRYGÆUS, aside.

O heavens! what tears that mortar will cost the Megarians.

W A R.

In what a horrible manner are you going to perish, O fertile Sicily†! There---Let somebody bring me a little Athenian honey, that I may put in a dose. [*Allusion to the losses of the Athenians.*]

TRYGÆUS, aside.

Not so fast, if you please, use some other honey; spare the Athenian; it costs four oboli. [*An arch pun.*]

W A R.

Hollow there, Tumult.

Enter TUMULT.

What's your will?

* A little town on the coast of Laconia, which the Athenians had taken and destroyed.

† One part of Sicily stuck fast to the Lacedemonians. The Athenians received a terrible check there, when they sent aux-

iliary troops to the Leontines: for he does not speak of the celebrated expedition to Syracuse, where they lost a very numerous fleet; for that did not happen till a long time after.

W A R.

W A R.

You stand there as idle and fixed as a post: there, take that you idle dog. [*She gives him a box on the ear.*]

T U M U L T.

Oh, how that blow smells of garlic.

W A R.

Will you bring me a pestle?

T U M U L T.

Do not you know that we have none? We came here but yesterday.

W A R.

Go run and borrow one of the Athenians.

T U M U L T.

If I must go, I must. (*aside*) If I do not bring one, woe betide me.

T R Y D Æ U S, *aside*.

Unhappy mortals, what are we about? what a terrible danger we are in! If the pestle is brought all the cities will be in powder presently. Ah Bacchus! would the porter's neck were broke.]]

W A R to T U M U L T, *who returns*.

Well?

T U M U L T.

Well?

W A R.

Hast thou not brought it?

T U M U L T.

No, faith. The Athenians have never a pestle now, their currier* is dead.

T R I G Æ U S, *aside*,

O Minerva, what luck! that that scourge of Greece should die, before the liquor was poured out which was preparing for us.

* Cleon slain near Amphipolis, in the 10th year of the war, and one year before this play was wrote.

W A R.

P E A C E.

W A R.

Run fetch me one from Lacedemon : will you go or not?

T U M U L T.

I fly thither.

W A R

Fly, and return.

T R Y G Æ U S, *to the audience.*

Another danger, gentlemen : if any one of us is skilled in the mysteries of Samothrace*, now is the time to implore the Gods to break the courier's legs.

T U M U L T, *returned.*

Ah, what sad luck have I!

W A R.

What, again have you brought nothing?

T U M U L T.

What would you have ? That other scourge of Lacedemonia † has had the same fate as that of Athens.

W A R.

How, you rascal ?

T U M U L T.

‡ Near Thrace, in going to succour the allies.

T R Y G Æ U S, *aside.*

O twin § Lacedemonians, how lucky for us ! Let's begin to breathe a little.

W A R *to* T U M U L T.Carry back these vessels, I'll make a pestle myself. (*Exeunt.*)

Trygæus, delivered from the fight and fear of this monster, abandons himself to joy, and exhorts the Greeks to prevent the

* The mysteries of Ceres, Hecate, and the other Gods of Samothrace, near the mouth of the Hebrus.

† Brasidas slain the same year, and in the same affair as Cleon.

‡ Near Amphipolis. § Castor and Pollux.
structure

structure of that fatal pestle*, by endeavouring to fetch out Peace from the bottom of the cavern, where she was enclosed. He calls the labourers about him, the market-people, the artists, the Athenians, the foreigners†, and the allied islanders, to assist him in

* The poet seems, by the new pestle, to mean Alcibiades, who, in the beginning of the 13th year of the Peloponnesian war, went to Argos, and there having received some auxiliary troops, went to Patres, and engaged the inhabitants of the country to fortify themselves even to the sea-side. He made several preparations against the Lacedemonians, Thucyd. l. 5. As this great man is often mentioned in Aristophanes, it would not be out of the way to say something concerning him. I will borrow from Plutarch the manner in which he retired to the Lacedemonians in the time of the famous expedition of Syracuse. "Finding himself accused of impiety, and being recalled, he sent to the Lacedemonians to demand a convoy, and liberty to come and dwell in their country; promising to do them more service by being their friend, than he had done them damage by being their enemy. The Lacedemonians granted him his request, and received him very willingly into their city, where, as soon as he arrived, he did three remarkable things. The first was, that the Lacedemonians, at his instigation, who before had delayed, resolved now to send speedy succours to the Syracusians, under the command of Gylippus, with intent to break the forces which the Athenians had sent there. The second thing was, that he made them make war upon the Athenians in Greece itself. The third, which was of the most importance, was, that he advised them to fortify the city of Decelia in the very territories of Attica, which consumed and deprest the power of the Athenians, as much, if not more, than any other thing. And if he was welcome, and well esteemed in Sparta by his public services, he did not less gain the favour and good will of particulars in private, by his manner of living in Laconia; so that those who saw him with his hair shaved to the

VOL. III.

skin, and bathing in cold water, eating brown bread, and black porridge, were doubtful, or I may say, could never believe, that such a man had any kitchen in his house; or had regarded even a perfumer, or ever touched a garment even in the city of Milet; for among the other artifices, of which he was full, they say, this was one by which he chiefly pleased the men: he conformed entirely to their manners, and way of living; transforming himself into all shapes as easy as aameleon." Instead of pursuing his journey to Athens, to which place he had been sent for, to give an account of his conduct, he concealed himself at Thurre; but was recognized by one, who asked him whether he durst not trust to the justice of his country? "Yes, certainly, said he, in any other case; but as long as I live, I will never trust even my own mother, lest by mistake she should put in the black bean instead of the white: and afterwards, when he heard that the Athenians had condemned him to die as an outlaw, he said, but I will make them sensible that I am yet alive." Which he did, as we shall see in another place, at his return to Athens.

Amyot has faithfully translated these words (the hair shaved to the skin:) but there appears to me to be a contradiction or fault in the Greek text; for Plutarch himself assures us, that, according to the laws of Lycurgus, the Lacedemonians suffered their hair and beard to grow. Alcibiades then ought to have done the same. A negative restored, in the Greek, would give the right sense, viz. That Alcibiades let his beard grow. I do not pretend to give this conjecture for a rule.

† The word foreigners and islanders, shew that they assisted at this piece at the time they brought their tribute; and consequently that it was played during the Dionysial festivals in the spring, and in the city.

P p

mov-

moving with ropes, the stones which stopped up the mouth of the cave. In short, all the Chorus run to him, which is composed of labourers, vine-dressers of Athmona, as was Trygæus, whom they called their captain. What is here very extraordinary is, that it is not easy to conceive where the scene lies. Sometimes it has been at Athmona, sometimes in the air, and heaven itself; then I know not where, unless we suppose Trygæus to have descended near the rock, and consequently upon the earth. The Chorus invite all the Greeks to follow them, and offer their services to Trygæus, to second him in his glorious enterprize.

A C T II.

Trygæus and the Chorus play a very comic scene: for the vine-dresser, who sees the stage full of people, who in their excess of joy triumph in the name of Peace, desires them to be silent for fear they should wake the monster, War, who is supposed not to be far off. The people, on the other hand, are not able to restrain their mirth, nor refrain from shewing how pleasing the hope, although distant, of Peace is to them. "At least moderate your transport, (says the vine-dresser) since your happiness is still uncertain. When once we see Peace, then you may jump, dance, laugh, sleep, eat, drink, play the Sybarite, and cry aloud, Let all be merry."

A game is here, and oftentimes in other places spoke of, concerning which, it will not be improper to say a word or two. It is the Cottabus*, for which we have no term in our language. It consisted either in simply throwing wine into the air, so that it might fall with a noise into the cup; or, fixing a stick in the ground, and hanging a pair of scales at the extremity, and under each plate two glasses full of water, in each a small image of brass: those that played threw out of a cup from a certain distance, some wine into the scales; and if they were clever enough to make the greatest part of it fall in the scale, so that it sunk down and struck the brazen image, they won the wager: or otherwise they drew conjectures, for, or against their amours, according as the sound made by the plate was more or less. This was a play of feasting and mirth. Aristophanes speaks of it in the Acharnians, and in other places. It appeared sufficient to me just to mention it. I have done the same with regard to other customs, which Aristophanes often

* *κοτταβίζειν* Cottabo ludere. Vid. Suidas.

mentions, and which it suffices to explain once for all, in giving an account of any one of the plays.

The Chorus wish for the time when these pleasures are to revive, if that time is ever to be seen again, after they have passed so many years in sufferings, lying hard, and living more austere-ly than Phormion*. He was a captain who had gained two sea-victories over the Lacedemonians: he led a very austere life. That same Chorus, composed of labourers and vine-dressers, complain of seeing themselves ruined by frequenting the Lyceum, a place where the Athenians performed military exercises in war-time: they give him up to the conduct of Trygæus, ready to obey him in all respects, to obtain peace; and Trygæus thinks of nothing but how to remove the great heap of stones which keep Peace a prisoner. This allegory is very ingenious, and very suitable to those who saw themselves in a disposition for Peace, knowing very well (what we are ignorant of) who were those stones, that is, those who were in opposition to the quiet and accommodation of Greece.

Mercury returns; but, like a threatening God, he says to Trygæus, "What are you about, you wretch?" "*No harm*, replies Trygæus, but only what Cilicon did before me†."

"You are a dead man," replies Mercury. Trygæus answers, that "he had made no provision for the voyage." An answer very conformable to the customs then in use. He intreats and cajoles Mercury, and puts him in mind of the meat he had brought him; and Mercury, like a good guard, lets him see that he is to be pacified. The Chorus load him with intreaties and caresses, so that he is hardly able to resist. But still they have not spoke clear enough for Mercury, who throws out a witticism in passing by; for Trygæus taking notice to him that the Chorus honoured him more than ever, he replies, "True, for they are now greater thieves than ever." They

* Pausan. in Attic.

† This was an answer which had become a proverb; for Cilicon intending to betray the island of Milet to the enemies of the state, being asked what he was about (when he was surprised in the fact) answered coolly, *No harm*. He, in effect, gave up the island, and afterwards having retired to the enemies at Samos, he went one day to buy some meat; and the butcher asking

him where he should cut it, he stretched out his hand to shew the place, and the butcher cut it off. The term of Cilicon became a proverb, to signify a traitor, as well as the words *no harm*. Trygæus, in his rustical dialect, uses this expression simply, to say that he was going to do a surprising deed, and fetch Peace out of the cavern.

soften him, by telling him that the sun, the God of the Persians*, wished for nothing more ardently than the ruin of the Greeks, who sacrificed to the other Gods, that he might have all the sacrifices to himself. At last Trygæus prevails upon Mercury, and gives him a golden cup. The God owns his frailty, yields, and consents even to be an accomplice in the enterprize: he begins with such libations as they judge necessary. Every one puts up vows and wishes† suitable to their inclinations; peculiar vows, and satyrical wishes. For example, they wish that whoever is for war may have the same lot as Cleonymus: he was unfortunate in battles, and accused of cowardice. This sort of sacrifice alludes to the omen which Melesippus‡, the ambassador of Lacedemon to Athens, took notice of; for not being able to gain any thing over the Athenians from the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, perhaps to revoke the cruel decree denounced against the Megarians; he says, in quitting the frontiers of Attica, these words, which proved too true afterwards: "This day, this melancholy day, will bring forth many evils to all Greece." Aristophanes returns these very words in a contrary sense; and prognosticates that this day shall be the beginning of a durable happiness.

After this ceremony, all having fastened their ropes to an enormous stone, they try to move it with vast efforts, but in vain. "Ah, says Trygæus, we do not pull equally! O people of Bæotia, you will repent of it!" Here he casts a reflection upon the Bæotians, as a people enemies of Peace, and the common good of Greece. He reflects again upon Lamachus, in these words: "Alas! we do not advance a step. O Lamachus! you are so lazy, that you do us no good. Alas! what signifies to us that scarecrow which you wear§?" meaning the gorgon, or plume upon his helmet.

Lamachus, although so often abused by Aristophanes, behaved very well afterwards, in the expedition of Sicily, where he commanded with Nicias and Alcibiades: he was there slain in a battle. Mercury also says something against the Argives, as if they had been obstacles to the Peace, by laughing at the losses of Greece, abusing the negotiations, changing party according to their own in-

* The Persians rejoiced to see the Greeks destroyed by the Peloponnesian war.

† Against those who wanted to command

armies as Cleon, and as Alcibiades actually did.

‡ Vide the Scoliast.

§ Lamachus is again rallied in the Acharnians, as we have seen them before.

terest.

terest. In effect, being but a little way distant from Laconia, one might perceive them wither away with spite, or triumph with joy, at the good or evil fortune of the publick. As for the rest, they were sometimes for the Athenians, at other times for the Lacedemonians; always ready to change, which made their alliance always suspected. It appeared so after the truce between Sparta and Athens: for they listened to the solicitations of Corinth, and pretended to put themselves in motion: but it seems also, by what Aristophanes says, that in the 13th year of the war, the desire of peace began to fix their natural restlessness. The poet at last gives us to understand, in this ingenious scene, that the Lacedemonians worked hard to bring about a peace; not that their generals were tired of the war, but because the state suffered by the interruption of the manufactures and commerce. He adds, that the Megarians also made some efforts, being compelled to it by the famine which devoured them; for they could not well live but by their trade with Athens, as we have seen heretofore: otherwise the salt of all this allegory, which is very fine, consists in the situation and play of the theatre, where we suppose all the people mentioned to pull either in earnest or shew, to the right or left, with or against their will, the cords fastened to the stone, which hinders Peace from coming out of the grott. As Trygæus sees, that they advance but slowly, he redoubles his exhortations; the Chorus encourage themselves by fresh cries; but it always happens, as Trygæus very well says, that some pull upwards, others downwards. He speaks again to the Megarians, as the chief authors of the misfortune, they who alone were able to poison Peace with their air. As for the Athenians, he desires them to be quiet, and to employ themselves in judging from morning to night: he only asks of them, (that they may contribute to the great work of Peace) to recede a little towards the sea, that is to say, either not to make war upon the Persians, or not to oppose extending their frontiers by land.

The Chorus, despairing to compass their design by the workmen, determine to reject all assistance from allies. It is for us labourers, say they, to execute so great a project. Immediately they set to work; and Mercury tells them that every thing goes better since they alone have to do with it. There are now the hands of all the labourers and vine-dressers busied in pulling with all their strength, and success soon crowns their ardour. Every one will agree, that these theatrical representations, as well political as allegorical, form a sort of comedy of themselves.

A C T.

A C T III. .

Peace comes out of the grot. Trygæus adores her as a Goddess: she appears accompanied by two women, who take their names from Fruitfulness and Beauty, inseparable companions of Peace: they are mutes. Trygæus is so transported with joy, that he is at a stand what compliment to pay them. He wants terms to express himself: a thing not very surprising, says he, since I have been in want of every thing during the war.

Mercury, in comparing Peace with War, says, that the one smells of garlic *; but that the other breaths nothing but pleasure, joy, festivals, the sweet poesies of Sophocles, or the light verses of Euripides †. Trygæus stops him at the last word: she loves not, says he, a poet at the bar. This is a ridicule upon the frequent debates in the tragedies of Euripides, which Quintillian judged very proper to form orators for the eloquence of the bar. "Look, says Mercury, see the charming union of cities, reconciled to each other:" "Look, rather at the spectators, says Trygæus, you'll read their trade in their faces." Upon that, he points with his finger to a scythe-maker, who laughs at the maker of javelins; and so of the rest. We have already observed several bits and scraps of Aristophanes, where he paints the spectators then present. Those unforeseen strokes were generally smart and touching. We shall find in other places a great number of the same sort. The conclusion is a remainder of that kind of comedy which Thespis used to exhibit from his cart, where they jeered every one who was unlucky enough to be found in the way, and deserved to be satirised.

Mercury sends back the labourers to their fields, with orders to lay down their arms, and to take up the instruments of agriculture. "Happy Peace, cries the Chorus, a day to be desired by men of worth! with what transport shall I see again my vines, and the fig trees which I planted in my youth! How willingly shall I embrace you again, after so long a separation ‡!"

Trygæus is of opinion, that before they retire, they should testify a public acknowledgment to Peace, who has been the author of

* Allusion to the warriors, who were great eaters of garlic.

† This expression is satirical.

‡ This place shews that there were still some labourers and vine-dressers who had

retired to Athens; and who, for many years, had not been able to visit their fields, on account of the inroads of the enemies. We find the same thing in the play of the Achærians, Act. II.

so much good. The hymn of the Chorus is as elegant and graceful as the exhortation of Trygæus. Every one asks of Mercury why that amiable Goddess has been so long hid and unknown to them? "Ah, never forget what I am going to tell you! O too happy swains! cries the God, do you know what it was that deprived you of Peace? It was this. The exile of Phidias was the first cause, and afterwards Pericles: for as he feared the same lot, and as he knew that you were of a ticklish disposition, he began to set the city together by the ears: he blew up the spark of the decree of the Megarians, which burst into all this fire: and from thence arose that thick smoke which has caused so many tears to Greece." These words are very remarkable; but it would be difficult to determine how the exile of Phidias was the first cause of the Peloponnesian war; if it was only said with Aristophanes, that Phidias being attached to Pericles, that person thought himself attacked in the person of Phidias, whom he loved, because of his extraordinary talents. In effect, Plutarch, in his story, confirms this interpretation. "Phidias, says he *, had undertaken to make the image of Pallas, and being a friend of Pericles, had great credit with him. This raised the envy of some ill-natured people, who being willing to sound the opinion of the people concerning Pericles, enticed Menon, one of the workmen, under Phidias, and made him come into the market-place, and demand a public security for his person, that he might accuse Phidias and declare some of the crimes which he had been guilty of. The populace received his information, and this accusation was heard in a large assembly of the people in the market-place, where he did not accuse him of any larcency, because Phidias, by the advice and council of Pericles, had so placed and disposed the gold in the composition of the image, from the beginning, that it might be taken out at will, and weighed; which Pericles alledged to the people, desiring them to take it out and weigh it: but the glory of the workmanship raised him this envy, as much as for having engraved upon the shield of the Goddess, the battle of the Amazons; and had brought in his own portrait from the life, under the figure of a bald-pated old man, who is represented lifting a great stone with both his hands. There was also the portraiture of Pericles very finely executed after the life: he is represented

* Plutarch of Amyot, in Pericles.

“ fighting with an Amazon, and contrived in such an attitude, that
 “ lifting up a javelin with his hand, it passes in a direct line before
 “ his face, as if by this artifice he was willing to hide and cover
 “ the likeness, which nevertheless discovers itself, and is seen on
 “ each side. However, Phidias was cast into prison, where he died
 “ of sickness; or rather of poison, which his enemies had prepared
 “ for him, as some are of opinion, to make Pericles more suspected
 “ and abused.” The accuser himself was rewarded. Philochorus
 says, that the statue was of gold and ivory; that Pericles presided
 over the work; and that Phidias, having taken a little gold
 from off the serpents on the Egid, was suspected of theft, and banished;
 that he retired to Elis, to make a Jupiter Olympus; and that this
 affair happened under the archon Theodore, seven years before the
 Peloponnesian war. 'Tis true that Thucydides does not mention it;
 but Aristophanes speaks according to the popular reports, whether true
 or false; and from this affair he dates the suspicion of Pericles, which
 made him resolve to occupy Athens with foreign wars, that he might
 govern without danger at home, by rendering himself necessary.
 One sure sign that they attacked him in the person of Phidias; and
 that they intended to reach him by degrees, is, that a little while
 after, they accused Aspasia*, his mistress, or his wife,

Trygæus and the Chorus jest upon the agreement of Peace with Phidias,
 as if the one had been banished with the other: Mercury, continuing
 his story, says, that the Grecian cities revolted against the Athenians,
 partly at the instigation of the Lacedemonians, and partly out of
 hatred and envy, that they might no longer pay a tribute; that the
 Athenians, notwithstanding the croud of poor labourers who retired
 to the city, suffered themselves to be dupes to the oracles, and assisted
 the country people in driving out Peace with pitchforks and clamours†;
 that Peace departed much against her will, not without turning her
 head towards Attica, which she loved; that in vain she sometimes
 shewed herself there again; that the allies encouraged and animated
 the rich to war, amusing them with false hopes, always well received.
 For Athens, added he, when reduced even to the utmost extremity,
 is always ready to taste the delicious morsel of flattery. The
 foreigners, charmed with these divisions, with bribes stopped the
 mouths of them who caused

* Plutarch, *ibid.*

† Aristophanes here very artificially paints an irritated republick, blowing up the fire of discord.

your misfortunes, and none of ye saw that Greece was perishing. The author of her decay was the currier *.

Trygæus here interrupts Mercury, to tell him, that he must not speak ill of a person deceased; "For, Cleon is your own now," says he to Mercury †; he is no longer with us, heaven be praised. "All the evil that he has done falls on your own shoulders."

The vine-dresser is very much surpris'd that all this while Peace says nothing. His surprize comes a little too late; but Mercury tells him, that she will say nothing to the spectators, because her anger is not yet appeas'd. However, as they are desirous of having a word of consolation from her, the God consents to question her by whispers, and is his own interpreter. She complains, says he, that you rejected her after the affair of Pylos ‡. We have acted ill, says Trygæus; but what would you have? our understanding was surrounded with hides §. Mercury continues to interrogate Peace: he asks her what friends she had? Trygæus answers for her, that no body was more affectionately her friend than Cleonymus; a cutting rallery on the cowardice of that Athenian; but lest there might be any doubt about this passage, it is explained by the following one, which says, that Cleonymus was of a quiet disposition, and not like his father; and that he laid down his arms in the midst of the battle. Peace in her turn questions Mercury concerning those who prevailed most in the assembly of the Athenians. He answers, that Hyperbolus carries all before him. She shakes her head, and by that gesture-expresses her sentiments plain enough. Hyperbolus, as it is said, was a wicked man, of low extraction, who had, by some way or other, found out the secret of winning the people over to him, and of being as great a rascal as Cleon, and followed by the like successors. Plutarch, after Thucydides and Cicero, speaks very ill of him. It is proper to observe, that the choice of Cleon, Hyperbolus, and such like ministers, proceeded less from the prejudice of the people of Athens, in favour of their merit, for a sort of merit they had, than from their jealousy and spite against the nobles, and the desire of having supports from people of low station. The best of it is, that at each question, Trygæus excuses the Athenians as well as he can; for example, in the affair of Hyperbolus, he says

* Cleon. † Mercury's office was to conduct the souls of men departed, to hell.

certain troops which had been intercepted in the island of Spacteria.

‡ It was when Cleon sent back the Lacedæmonian ambassador, who came about

§ Because Cleon, the currier at that time led the people as he pleased.

smartly enough, "Well, then we will have nothing more to do with him: but the people finding themselves naked, and in a miserable condition, had made a cloke of him." "Alas! but what advantage have the people gained, says Peace, by the mouth of Mercury? Trygæus answers, that as Hyperbolus was by trade a lantern-maker, he helped the Athenians, who were very blind in their own affairs, to see a little clearer." Can any thing be said more terrible against an individual, and the common wealth? Let us not yet leave the present scene. "Ah, says Mercury, what questions Peace has put to me! what is become of Sophocles since she left Attica! she speaks of a very distant period. What is become of him? why, he is become as avaricious and selfish as the poet Simonides." This is expressed in a more delicate manner; but which we should not understand the better. This is the nature of Aristophanes; he had praised Sophocles in other places, though he uses him ill in this. He was jealous of his fine genius; and besides, the comic poets were not accustomed to spare even their best friends. Again, it was necessary to laugh with the public at whatever they said. We see also that their ralleries did not take effect, at least great part of them. Cleon continued to be a powerful person, and even commanded armies, although he had been taken off upon the stage; nor was the reputation of Euripides injured by any of the strokes that Aristophanes levelled at him on all occasions.

Peace asks what is become of Cratinus, the comic poet? she is told that he died in the time when Athens was hard pressed by the Lacedemonians; and that the grief of having seen one of his casks* bulged, had been the cause of his death. Cratinus loved drinking as well as Eschylus his model; in other respects, he was as bold and fiery as Aristophanes. Mercury gives one of the attendants of Peace in marriage to Trygæus, and orders him to take the other woman, or Goddess, to the senate house. Trygæus is desirous to return home on the back of his beetle, but it is no where to be found; and he is told that he has nothing to do but to follow Peace, to arrive safe at his own house: he then calls the three Goddesses†, and goes off with their train. Here the Chorus advance and speak to the spectators. After having wished the Divinities a good

* Vessels for wine, something different from ours.

† *ἑκαστα*. There were therefore more than one; the text shows that there were three.

journey,

journey, and exhorted Trygæus not to suffer himself to be robbed, a thing which often happens at the theatre*, he addresses himself to the pit; and after having said that a comic poet who praises himself, deserves to be punished by the lictors, he adds, that if any one deserves to be praised it is Aristophanes. Very few people praised themselves unpunished. In effect, he sounds his own trumpet; but, at the same time, he gives us instructions concerning the taste of the players of those times. "Our poet, says the Chorus, is particularly worthy of praise, for having banished from his theatre, all low drollery. There are no beggars introduced in the scenes; no devouring Hercules, no slaves beaten with the stirup-leather, and giving their master's warning†. He has contrived to throw out all these meannesses, and exalting comedy, as it were, he has enlivened it with great sentiments, and embellished it with noble verses. His drolleries have nothing rustical; nor does he take delight in ridiculing miserable objects, or laughing at women. Like a new Alcides, he arms himself with a club, and dares to attack the Cerberus of Athens". It is Cleon who is here painted under so frightful a figure, and which is not very capable of being translated. Aristophanes jokes about his being bald-pated, which is all the harm he says of him; but in revenge he falls as heavy as lead upon some tragic poets, who were but little esteemed, such as Morfimus and Melanthius. It is remarkable, that Aristophanes, who every where boasts of his courage in attacking Cleon, one of the most powerful republicans that ever was, now here prides himself upon having deprest Socrates. From which I draw two conclusions: the first is, that we, his posterity, have set Socrates upon his legs again; but that, after all, in his time, he was no more than a philosopher, and an object of the satyrical strokes of Cratinus and his accomplices. The second is, that the comedy of the Clouds has not been in reality the chief cause of the envy the Athenians had of Socrates; and much less of his death. Nevertheless, I am very far from believing what M. Dacier‡ quotes, "That Aristophanes was a good friend of Socrates; and that he wrote that play only to make him laugh, without any design of affronting him." This is wholly ridiculous.

* An allusion to the robberies committed at the play-house. bad poets.

† The subjects and scenes common to

‡ Preface to Plutus and the Clouds.

A C T IV.

" Ah, says Trygæus to his servant, how painful it is to approach the Gods! I am quite broken down with the journey*. How small ye appeared, all of ye, when I was up in the air! you seemed to be very wicked, even when I viewed ye; but it is ten times worse when one's near ye." This is a good stroke enough against the Athenians. The servant rejoices to see his master returned, and asks him what he saw in his voyage? " Nothing," says Trygæus, except one or two wandering spirits, who were " looking for Dithyrambics;" that is, high-flown verses. This is Horace's idea of poets who lose themselves in the Clouds†; or it is rather, the natural idea, which Aristophanes has rendered sensible. Is it true, says the servant, that we shall become stars after our death? Nothing more so, replies the master. Upon which he shews a constellation, and jokes about a poet, who had taken its name, for having placed it at the beginning of one of his poems, and is witty upon some of the stars that shine with the greatest lustre, saying, that they are coming from the ball with their lanterns. There was therefore some allusion hidden under this witticism. After this rally he orders his servant to prepare every thing for the wedding, and to conduct the woman destined to be his wife, from among the attendants of Peace, to the bath, and to make haste, because he is to carry the other, or Peace, to the senate-house.

He is congratulated in one short scene: and the Goddess is brought back to him in another. In a third, he asks the spectators, which of them will take the charge of the other companion of Peace? Some very satirical allusions are made here. To pass lightly, as we ought indeed, over several things, it is sufficient to say, that Trygæus harangues the senate, where he accuses the judges of avarice. He receives the congratulations of the Chorus, and congratulates himself upon his having delivered the people from a thousand misfortunes, and from the attempts of Hyperbolus, by restoring Peace.

The business now in hand is to make a sacrifice to this Goddess lately returned to Athens. Trygæus and the Chorus deliberate very humorously about the choice of a victim. At last they determine to take a lamb to imitate sweetness. The servant runs to fetch the lamb, and prepare the altar. They intreat him to make haste, lest

* To the spectators. † Nubes et inania captat. HORAT.

the parasite Chæris, a player upon the flute, should come and partake part of the sacrifice. The slave being returned, they begin the ceremony; but not without many allusions and drolleries, for which there is here no room: after that they proceed to invocations; and they intreat Peace not to imitate the coquets: they conjure her to spread among the Greeks, the spirit of union and concord, with an oblivion of what was past, to pour out abundance upon the country, and to bring back to Athens the eels of Copay*. They conclude these prayers with a stroke against several parasites, whom they name. Trygæus refuses to strangle the victim himself, "Because," says he, Peace loves not blood." The sacred fire is lighted; while these things are doing, a man comes in with a bold arrogant air: they take him for a prophet. He is worse than that, says Trygæus, it is Hierocles. This man was a sort of augurer of Eubœa; and as the people of Eubœa were averse to Peace, he represents them here such as they are. At first they pretend not to see him; but Hierocles, drawn thither by the smell of the meat, and by the apparatus of a sacrifice, wants to know the meaning of it; and understanding that they sacrificed to Peace, he repeats several obscure verses after the manner of oracles, to shew that the time for Peace is not yet come. They rally him, and dismiss him by the interpretation of his own oracles, without deigning to give him part of the sacrifice, to which he had come like a parasite. The Athenians were as superstitious as the Romans, and they greatly prized the augurers; insomuch, that they admitted them into the Prytaneum, where they lived at the expence of the state, especially in time of war. It is therefore not surprising that Hierocles should be against a peace. But the Chorus, who know the value of it, exclaim against war, and with great boldness decry all those who trouble the state. Lions in the bosom of the republic, and foxes in action.

A C T V.

This act is short, and not agreeable to our taste. A croud of people of different trades meet together, as, the makers of the plume of feathers, of cuirasses, of trumpets, of javelins, and hel-

* A lake of Bœotia, of which we have spoken already. The Athenians were very fond of eels, of this lake; and the war interrupted this commerce.

ments. All of them complain that their trades are become useless by Peace. On the other hand the scythe-seller and the wine-merchant bring their presents to Trygæus, as newly married, to share in the joy of the nuptial feast: he invites them to the wedding, and laughs at the others. A child sings at the feast, and always in his songs mixes some verses about war, which puts Trygæus in a passion. At last they sing the epithalamium, where there is something wanting. There is nothing here that is rare, unless we may suppose some allusions and allegories, of which time has bereft us of the explanation, and even of the pleasure of conjecture.

THE

T H E
B I R D S.

A
COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Acted the 18th year of the Peloponnesian war, in the second year of the 91st Olympiad, during the Dionysial festivals, Ckabrias being Archon. This date is proved by the Greek prefaces, and by some historical facts in Aristophanes.

ALTHOUGH the late Mr Boivin's elegant translation of this play has recently appeared in public, I thought I could not excuse myself from publishing it again in my own way, and making it a considerable part of this collection: not only to render my work complete, but also to throw a new light upon this and the other pieces, by the comparison which naturally results, of the whole, with each part separately, in its place. It may be seen already, by what has past, how much a play of Aristophanes loses by being disunited and separated from the others. If we read but one part we see, as one may say, a body without a soul: their connection alone is capable of animating them; and of throwing that clearness upon them, which, under apparent buffooneries, discover to us the most profound mysteries of the policy of Athens, the different commotions which disturbed Greece; and in a word, the intrigue and secret of the Peloponnesian war. But if the other plays, such as the Clouds and Plutus, are hardly able to support themselves, when separated from the whole, I dare assert, that this of the Birds will be still less so: considering the depth of his plot, and the obscurity of

alle-

allegories; so that, although I pay a deference to the hints of the learned M. Boivin, whose labour I own has been of use to me, I thought that by departing, as I was obliged to do, from his principal design, and in pursuing my own method of translation, which I have no right to prefer to his, I might here exhibit the same thing under a different form. In effect, as the allegory in this piece is perhaps the most obscure, and the enigma the most difficult of any that Aristophanes has left us, I have endeavoured to explain it in such a manner that the reader will, I hope, find a system as clear as it is new.

We have three prefaces in the Greek concerning this play; they all agree about the date: the argument is the same in all three. It is this: two Athenians, to avoid the fury of the prosecutions, and the division which then reigned at Athens, took it into their head to transport themselves to the country of the Birds, and persuaded them to build a city which they called Nephelococcygie*, of which one of the Athenians was elected king. But these prefaces do not agree about the essential design of the poet. The whole consists in finding the key. The first author says, that the design is only to ridicule the Athenians for being too free with lawsuits and judgments. The second says nothing at all about it; and the third, which is more extensive, and which M. Boivin has translated and followed, after having shewed, in a few words, the greatness and the decay of Athens, by the bad administration of affairs, hints indirectly concerning the city of Decelia, of which we shall speak hereafter. After that, he says, that Aristophanes was never so daring as in this play; that in his other works he had veiled his satyrs: but that here he had taken a greater compass: that his design was to shew, that the miseries of the state were inevitable. "If, in the first place, they did not entirely change the ministry, which was composed of a pack of rascals. Secondly, if the Athenians did not change their nature and character, so far as to embrace a more quiet way of living. Thirdly, if they did not even change their religion and Gods, since those of their country had abandoned them."

This unknown writer adds, that all the parts tend to one general end; namely, that the faults of the Athenians and the prime magistrates are pointed out by the most lively satire, to inspire the au-

* This name is taken from the Clouds and Cuckops.

dience with the desire of a reformation: that for this reason a city is feigned in the air, separated from the earth: that the consultations of the senate of birds are set up in direct opposition to the foolish assemblies of the Athenian senate: that a magistrate is introduced, and a cryer, to describe the real characters of persons entirely devoted to their own interest, and a shameful avarice; even the Gods are ridiculed on account of the strange idea the people had formed of them. This same writer does not deny but, that if credit may be given to other writers, Aristophanes meant only to rally the tragic poets upon their wild notions; and that this was the reason of his making the birds fight with the deities, in allusion to the battle of the giants at Phlegra, which he ridicules.

It is very visible that the policy of this author, who was not so ancient as one would think, is false from beginning to end. Aristophanes had no view of insinuating to the Athenians that they should change their form of government, much less their religion and Gods. This last article was too delicate, and the poet had before his eyes examples too recent of the severity of Athens, against those who philosophised against the customs and ceremonies of the country, to dare to tell them, even in jest, that they should abolish them. We shall, at the end of the plays, publish what reflections may reasonably be made on this head, to reconcile the strange liberty which the poets, and Aristophanes in particular, takes with the Gods; with the rigour of the Athenians in punishing those who blamed their ancient superstitions, and were desirous of introducing new ones. But we are here to treat of the general system of the comedy of the Birds; and to enter into it well, I must intreat the reader to read patiently a long passage out of the life of Alcibiades, by Plutarch, which I thought necessary to consult, to come at the truth; Cornelius being too concise and too superficial.

*“ Then as to the expedition of Sicily, it is true that the Athenians
 “ had already begun to covet that island, in the life of Pericles; but,
 “ nevertheless, they never touched it till after his death, under pre-
 “ tence of making alliances, and sending ordinary succours to the ci-
 “ ties which were besieged and harrassed by the people of Syracuse,
 “ which was like building a bridge for a more powerful army to
 “ pass over afterwards: but he that inflamed them with desire at all
 “ points, and persuaded them no longer to send by little and little, but
 “ to go there with a great and powerful army all at once, and en-
 “ tirely conquer and subject it to themselves, was Alcibiades.
 “ The people, persuaded by the force of his arguments, con-

* Plutarch's lives, translated by Amyot.

“ceived great imaginations, and he himself indeed much greater;
 “for the conquest of Sicily, which was the utmost extent and bound-
 “dary of the ambition of others, was not more than the beginning
 “of his; and while Nicias, by his usual remonstrances, diverted
 “the Athenians from undertaking a war against the Syracusians,
 “thinking the capture of the city of Syracuse too difficult an ad-
 “venture, Alcibiades, on the other hand, had already concerted
 “in his mind the conquest of Lybia and Carthage*, which being
 “perfected, he had already passed to Italy and Peloponnesus; so
 “that Sicily no longer served for any thing but to furnish all sorts
 “of necessaries for the other conquests of his imagination. Thus
 “the young men were elevated with great hopes, and listened
 “with vast attention to some of the old ones, who would recount to
 “them the wonders of this expedition; insomuch, that all the
 “places destined for the exercise of the youth, and all public por-
 “ticos, were crowded with men sitting in a ring, to see described
 “upon the ground, the form of Sicily, and the situation of Lybia
 “and Carthage. Yet it is said, that neither Socrates† the philo-
 “sopher, nor Meto‡ the astrologer, had any good hopes of this
 “expedition§.

“Nicias was concerned that he was chosen captain for the carrying
 “on this war, being not less dissatisfied on account of the compa-
 “nion he was to have in it, than the inconveniences he foresaw
 “would attend the enterprise; but the Athenians thought, that
 “they would have a better chance of succeeding in this war, if it
 “was not entrusted wholly to the daring spirit of Alcibiades. They
 “therefore joined Nicias with him in the command, whose prudence
 “they more relied on; especially, as Lamachus, the third captain,
 “whom they had sent, although he was of maturer age, had shewed
 “himself in some battles to be not less fiery, less daring, nor less
 “enterprising than Alcibiades.||

* A celebrated city of Africa, the rival of Rome, built by Dido. Alcibiades was the first of the Greeks who had the ambition of being the conqueror of that city; which confirms the correction made by some learned men, which I have adopted, in regard to Carthage, which should have been changed into Chalcedonia, in the play of the Knights; for the history and the siege agree with the correction.

† He is spoken of in this play.

‡ Meto, the astronomer, is also one of the characters.

§ Plutarch tells us here what is said of Meto, who pretended to be raving mad; and that he even set fire to his own house, to obtain from the people that his son might not be one in the expedition to Sicily; which he obtained.

|| Plutarch here mentions the fresh endeavour of Nicias to destroy the preparations and the project of the war of Sicily.

“ When

“ When every thing was ready and prepared for the expedition,
 “ many bad omens happened ; and, amongst others, it unluckily fell
 “ out, that the day fixed for the embarkation was that very day
 “ on which the festival called Adonia was to be celebrated : a day
 “ on which the women mourned and wept in memory of Venus be-
 “ wailing the death of Adonis. Moreover the Hermes, or figures
 “ and images of Mercury, which the ancients used to place in the
 “ cross roads, were one night found almost entirely demolished
 “ and wounded in the face, which troubled and frightened many
 “ people ; even those who very little regarded such things.” Plu-
 tarch says, that great enquiries were made ; and that on this oc-
 casion the orator Androcles accused Alcibiades as if he had com-
 mitted, or caused to be committed, this singular piece of impiety,
 which he pretended to prove by another act of the same kind, that
 Alcibiades had been guilty of, namely, the mocking of the mysteries
 of Ceres and Proserpine.

“ Alcibiades was at first a little startled ; but in the end finding
 “ that the sailors and soldiers who were to go in this voyage to Sicily,
 “ were all well inclined towards him, particularly the auxiliaries
 “ from Argos and Mantinia, which consisted of a thousand foot
 “ well armed, who had publicly declared that it was for love of
 “ Alcibiades that they had undertaken such a long voyage beyond
 “ sea ; and that if any ill treatment was offered him, they would
 “ return back directly to their own houses : He then took courage,
 “ and considered the favour of the time for presenting himself to be
 “ tried, and to answer to any one who should accuse him. Upon
 “ which, his enemies held their peace a little, fearing that the
 “ people would shew themselves partial with regard to him, in propor-
 “ tion to the affairs he had with them. For which reason, to obviate
 “ this danger, they brought over to themselves some other orators,
 “ who pretended to be no enemies to Alcibiades ; yet nevertheless
 “ wished him no better than those who were his avowed enemies.
 “ These got up in a full assembly of the council, and said, that it was
 “ not right that he who had been elected one of the captain-generals of
 “ such a great and powerful army, which was ready to set sail,
 “ should stop with loss of time and opportunity of doing good, while
 “ judges should be chosen, and time appointed for him to give an
 “ answer. But nevertheless, said they, let him for the present pur-
 “ sue his journey with all possible expedition ; but that afterwards,
 “ when the war should be finished, he should appear and clear
 “ himself of the charge against him. But Alcibiades, having imme-
 diately

"diately discovered the malice of this delay, was beforehand with
 "them, and shewed that it signified nothing his going out chief of
 "so great a power, while his mind was kept in continual fear and
 "apprehension of those monstrous imputations which he left behind
 "him, and was to meet with again; and if he did not entirely
 "clear himself of them, would be in danger of death: but that,
 "when he should have justified himself and be found innocent, he
 "should then have nothing in his thoughts but how to engage the
 "enemy. This however he could not persuade the judges to
 "grant; and he was expressly enjoined by the people to embark.
 "Thus was he obliged to embark with the rest of his com-
 "panions, their fleet consisting of near 140 gallies, all with three oars
 "on each bench, and of infantry well armed 5100; of slingers, arch-
 "ers, and others lightly armed, about 1300, with sufficient ammuni-
 "tion and equipage for the war. Being arrived at the coast of Italy, they
 "landed at the city of Rhegio*. There a council being held about
 "the conduct of the war, Alcibiades was of opinion that they
 "ought to march directly to Sicily; which advice was followed,
 "though Nicias was against it, because Lamachus was for it. The
 "first exploit of Alcibiades upon his arrival was, the surprize of the city
 "of Catania; but he did nothing of consequence after that, being in-
 "stantly recalled† by the Athenians, to answer to the crimes he was
 "charged with." Plutarch describes the fury and intrigues of his ene-
 "mies during his absence, and the imprisonment and punishment of se-
 "veral citizens on account of the mutilated statues. "The people employ-
 "ed all their fury against Alcibiades, and finally sent him the galley cal-
 "led the Salaminian galley." Alcibiades, it is added, enraged against
 his country, caused her to lose Messina, where he had intelligence,
 which he discovered. He went on board the galley, and sailed
 to Thuria‡, where he lay concealed; afterward at Peloponnesus
 in Argos, and lastly in Sparta, where he animated the Lacedemo-
 nians to make three fatal enterprizes upon the Athenians. "The
 "first was to succour Sicily; the second, to attack the Athenians in

* Rhegio or Rhegium, a city of the Upper Calabria, in the kingdom of Naples, upon the streights of Messina, opposite to Sicily.

† The 17th year of the Peloponnesian war. Thucyd. l. 6.

‡ Thurium, a city of Græcia Major or Calabria, built by the Sybarites, who were

driven from Sybaris by the inhabitants of Crotona. This has been mentioned in another place. It is said that the inhabitants of Thurium had a law which forbade any personal reflection in their public sports, except against the adulterers and the busy body.

"Greece; and the third, which was of the greatest importance, was, that he advised them to fortify in the territory of Attica itself the town of Decelia, which consumed and brought down the power of Athens more than any other cause."

The whole of this passage is remarkable, and particularly the last words of it, which are the basis of the comedy we are now about to examine. The Lacedemonians, adds Cornelius Nepos, by the advice of Alcibiades, made an alliance with the king of Persia, fortified Decelia in Attica, placed a strong garrison there, which kept the Athenians in continual awe; and, after having detached the Ionians from the interest of their rival, they secured to themselves the empire of Greece against her.

The design of fortifying Decelia was upon the point of being executed when Aristophanes writ his comedy. As he foresaw the dangerous consequences, and had bad presages concerning the expedition into Sicily, being attached to Nicias, whose sentiments he had adopted, he contrived the following enigma, to rally the project and ambition of Lacedemon, and still more to engage the Athenians to prevent the misfortune that threatened them, in case Decelia should become a place of arms for the Lacedemonians. Though he says nothing of the war of Sicily, for fear of offending the people who were prejudiced in its favour, it is easy to discover that his design was artfully to set his country against it, and to prevail upon them to recal their troops, that they might be employed against the more important enterprize of Lacedemon. M. Paulmier discovered before me the explanation of the allegorical play before us; but then he expresses himself in one word, whereas I flatter myself that I have by this declaration rendered it so clear that the comedy will become more curious and interesting.

A C T I.

Evelpis and Pisthetherus, each of them Athenians, appear with a bird perched on their fist. One of them carries a jay, the other a crow; these being their guides to the country of the birds: a very humorous whim, and a preparative for all the fantastical variety that follows. The actors, always consulting their birds, go and come, advance and recede, and make an hundred turnings about the rocks, just as it pleases their guides, who amuse themselves with pecking their fingers, which occasions many jokes, which are better and more ludicrous when spoken by the actors, than in reading; for at first it is the scene only which lets the audience into the story.

A

A part of what Evelpis says, helps to explain the subject. "Know, gentlemen, says he, that our disease is quite different from that of Sacas; for he, not being an Athenian, wanted to be one in spite of fate. Now we who are Athenians, and without vanity, we may say, of a good family, fly from our country like birds: 'tis not because it is hateful to us, as if it was neither magnificent nor fortunate, nor fit to ruin people; but what can we do? The grasshoppers sing but a month or two; but the Athenians spend their whole life in chirping in the courts of justice. Now this is the very sort of music which we have no taste for, and which drives us away. A crow, a vase, and a sprig of myrtle is all our baggage: we are in search of a place where there is no pleading of causes, and where we quietly spend the rest of our days. Tereus, whom we are going to visit, will certainly inform us, if, since he is become a bird *, he has not found out the place we sigh for." Upon mentioning their quality, upon which the two citizens pique themselves, and in the whole sequel of their discourse, who is it that does not see that it is Alcibiades flying from the rigor of the tribunals, and constrained to seek for an asylum at Lacedemon? they arrive at the rock: they knock. The valet of Tereus comes out, in form of a hideous bird; that is, with a frightful masque, and some feathers scattered over his body. The terror is reciprocal: the Athenians take him for a monster upon seeing his bill open hideously; and he imagines them to be bird-catchers. However, they question one another. The two Athenians deny themselves to be men; and the other says, that he is a bird in the capacity of a valet: not that the birds have any occasion for footmen, but because that he and Tereus being once men, they still preserved some of their manners. We must not be surprised that Aristophanes describes the Lacedemonians under the form of birds, and the Athenians as men; for the latter looked on the former as Greeks who were of a different species, on account of their uncouth manners and savage customs. Perhaps their expertness in war is hinted at. In another respect, the poet veils himself, as it were, designing to be understood by half a word; and according to his custom presents comical scenes, that the truth may pass under favour of mirth and laughter. The servant being gone to wake

* Every body knows without doubt the Iomela into a nightingale. Vide Ovid, story of Tereus: he was changed into a Met. l. 6. and Virgil. lapwing, Brogue into a swallow, and Philo

THE BIRDS.

311

his master, Evelpis in the interim perceives that in his fright he had lost his jay.

PISTHETERUS.

What, have you let mine fly away? Shame on you, you coward.

EVELPIS.

Why, pray sir, when you was in your panic, did not you let the crow make his escape?

PISTHETERUS.

No, I faith not I.

EVELPIS.

No! why where is he then?

PISTHETERUS.

Gone. He went away of himself.

EVELPIS.

'Tis very true. If the crow flew away of himself, you did not let him go. I faith you reason well.

(Thus did the people of Athens reason when they had let Alcibiades escape to Thuria.) Tereus appears in the form of a lapwing. It is very evident that he is to represent Agis king of Lacedemon.

TEREUS.

Hola there, make way for me through the wood, that I may come out.

EVELPIS.

By Hercules, Mr. Bird, you're a strange fellow, with your wings and triple crest.

TEREUS.

Where are these people who want me?

EVELPIS, *aside*.

The twelve Gods were certainly in a terrible ill humour when they fashioned your birdship.

TEREUS.

You make a jest of my feathered coat, sir; you need not laugh, I was once a man as you are.

EVEL-

THE BIRDS.

EVELPIS, *laughing in spite of himself.*

'Tis well you've told us. I should hardly have thought it.

TEREUS.

Pray what makes you laugh so immoderately?

EVELPIS.

We do not laugh at you, but at your beak, which is so comically arched.

TEREUS.

Why, it is true, Sophocles has been pleased thus to disfigure Tereus* in his tragedies.

EVELPIS.

What, you are Tereus then. Pray, are you a bird or a peacock†?

TEREUS.

A bird.

EVELPIS.

Where are your feathers?

TEREUS.

They are almost all fallen.

EVELPIS.

By a fit of illness, I suppose.

TEREUS.

No: but in the bird-country, you must know, it is customary to molt in the winter, to have a new coat.

Aristophanes was certainly not ignorant that the time of molting was the summer, and not the winter; but he means to show the austerity of the Lacedemonians, who gloried in exposing themselves to heat and cold.

TEREUS *continues.*

But pray who are ye?

EVELPIS.

Men.

TEREUS.

Of what nation?

* Sophocles wrote a tragedy of that name; but it is lost.

† He says *Peacock*, instead of *Man*, in allusion to Argus, who kept Io, and was changed into a peacock. This is an equivoque purely Greek.

EVEL-

EVELPIS.

Do you know where there are the finest galleys?

TEREUS.

Oh, now I understand ye. You are Athenians, and lawyers, without doubt.

EVELPIS.

Quite the contrary. We are anti-lawyers.

TEREUS.

Anti-lawyers! Are there any of that sect in Attica?

EVELPIS.

Why, to tell you the truth, there are but very few.

TEREUS.

And, pray, what is the cause of your journey?

EVELPIS.

To pay you our respects.

TEREUS.

Can I serve you in any thing?

EVELPIS.

I'll tell you.—You have been a man; we are men also. You have been in debt; so are we. You have been glad to get off without payment; so shall we. Since you have changed to a bird, you have made the tour of earth and sea, with the double experience of man and bird: now tell us, we pray you, of some good city where we may sleep in peace.

TEREUS.

What, do you want a larger city than Athens?

EVELPIS.

Not a larger, but a more convenient city.

TEREUS.

Oh, oh: you love aristocracy, I find. [Alcibiades was of that taste.]

VOL. III. S 1

EVEL-

THE BIRDS

EVELPIS.

Not I: I hate Aristocrates*.

[Tereus having asked Evelpis and Pistheterus, one after the other, what city would suit them best, the former wants one where he should be continually invited to great feasts; and the latter where he can live as a debauchee. (Alcibiades loved debauchery and good cheer. Tereus rallies them, and shews them a city upon the coast of the Red-sea.)

EVELPIS.

No maritime city for me, I beg of you. We shall have the serjeants of arrest visit us soon in the Salaminian galley.

[It is as clear as the day, that this stroke relates to the recall of Alcibiades, to whom they sent the Salaminian galley, with orders from the people to come and justify himself. So remarkable a passage justifies what we have said, and what we shall say in the sequel, concerning this recall and its effects.]

TEREUS.

Why don't you go and live at Leprea?

[This city is in Elis; and Alcibiades had been there, says Cornelius Nepos, before his retreat to Sparta.]

EVELPIS.

By all the Gods I hate Leprea mortally, tho' I never saw it in all my life. Melanthius † came from thence.

TEREUS.

You have still in Locrida the city of the Opuntii.

EVELPIS.

I would not be Opuntius || for a talent of gold. But tell us of your bird-life: what do you say of it? You ought to have had experience enough in it.

TEREUS.

Why, upon the whole, it is agreeable enough; for, in the first place, we have nothing to do with money. [At Sparta, tho' the state was opulent, the private people were but poor.]

* A bad orator, the son of Sellius.

† Melanthius the Leper, who wrote tragedies.

|| The poet plays upon the word Opuntius, the name of a citizen of Athens, who was a tiresome blind fellow.

THE BIRDS

EUPELPIUS

That's one evil the less.

TEREUS.

We feed upon the *sesamum*, the myrtle, the poppies, and other flowers. [The Lacedemonians were very sober.]

EUPELPIUS.

Plague take 'em; they're only fit for marriage-feasts.

PISTHETERUS.

Ah, what a powerful republick might you make, if you would believe me! [Here one would think Alcibiades spoke, beginning that advice to Agis so fatal to Athens.]

TEREUS.

How?

PISTHETERUS.

In primo. Do not catch at butterflies so much with that monstrous bill open: 'tis an indecent silly thing*. If any one with us was to ask Teleas the augurer what such a bird was, he would reply, it is of an inconstant irresolute species, incapable of attaching itself to any party: 'tis as a bird on the spray. [This signifies, "Do not imitate the Athenians, who are inconstant, and have a thousand projects in their head; and change your own method of making war. Instead of flying about in parties, fix yourselves somewhere near the enemy." Thus spoke Alcibiades to the Lacedemonians.]

TEREUS.

By Bacchus, that's a good speech. What shall we do then?

PISTHETERUS.

Assemble in a city.

TEREUS.

A city! What, and of birds too!

* This passage is obscure and difficult. Suidas gives it a sense quite different from that of Mr. Bouvin. He makes the rallery fall upon this Teleas, as an inconstant man. I think the other sense appears better founded.

THE BIRDS.

PISTHETERUS.

What a poor reasoner! Look below.

TEREUS.

I do.

PISTHETERUS.

Above.

TEREUS.

I do.

PISTHETERUS.

[Taking Tereus by the back, turning him like a weather-cock bill.

There, turn your head about this way—that way—every way.

TEREUS.

I shall gain much, truly, by your wringing my neck off*.

PISTHETERUS.

Have you seen nothing?

TEREUS.

Nothing but clouds and sky.

PISTHETERUS.

Why, that's the thing: are they not the *pole* of the birds?

TEREUS.

The *pole* of the birds! What do you mean?

PISTHETERUS.

Yes, pole: as if one had said *place*; for the air turns all round it. Does it not? wherefore we say *pole*: now if you encompass it with walls †, this same *pole* becomes || *polis*, a city: is not that clear? By these means you will make the men sing like grasshoppers, and starve the Gods by a hunger more sharp than the Melian ‡ hunger.

[We shall see in the sequel, that by the *men* is meant all Greece, and by the *Gods* Athens.]

* All this jesting, or what is equivalent to it, is in the Knights.

† Aristophanes here means the philosophy of Socrates; of which speaking, in another place, he says, that he (Socrates) represented the heavens as an oven. See the Clouds.

|| Mr. Brumoy should have told his readers that *polis* (πολις) was Greek for a city.

‡ Alluding to Melos, an island in the Egean sea, which Nicias obliged to surrender by famine.

TEREUS.

TEREUS.

How will this be done?

PISTHETERUS.

Nothing more easy. The air is between the heaven and the earth: that is true, is it not? Now as we, when we have a mind to go to Delphos, are obliged to demand a passport of the Beotians, so, when the men shall offer their sacrifices, you may stop short the smoke, unless the Gods agree to pay you a tribute for the right of the passage. [One may easily guess that Decelia is here figuratively spoken of: that city being in the territory of Attica, the Lacedemonians could not make it their seat of arms, without interrupting the commerce between Athens and part of Greece, and without greatly incommoding the Athenians. This is what Alcibiades gave the Spartans to understand: Decelia, when fortified, was to be to them what Beotia was, which barred the passage to Delphos since the declaration of war.]

TEREUS, *laughing*.

Hah, hah, hah: I swear by the earth, by the snares, by the clouds, by the nets, I never heard in my life of a more comical fancy. Come, come, we will build a city: I am determin'd upon it, provided the other birds consent.

PISTHETERUS.

But who can make them understand this affair?

TEREUS.

You yourself. I found them wild; but by a long sojourn amongst them, I have so well taught them the human language, that they both understand and speak it well.

[The Peloponnesian war had occasioned so many conferences between the Athenians and the Lacedemonians, that the latter, to penetrate into the hidden sense of Aristophanes, seem'd to become more human.]

PISTHETERUS.

And how shall we assemble them?

TEREUS.

Very easily. I'll go into the grove, and wake my dear companion:

TEREUS

panion *: and then we'll call them, and you shall see them all come flying at the sound of our voice.

PISTHETERUS.

O thou most amiable of all birds, make haste, I beseech thee, and lose no time. Adieu; go to the woods, and wake your companion.

Tereus immediately begins to sing after the manner of the tragic Choruses, by way of parody. The sweetness of the nightingale's voice, and the adventure of Itys, so often celebrated by the Greek poets, are here commemorated. Evelpis interrupts him; but his companion forces him to be silent. Immediately, Tereus making a prelude with the cries of a lapwing, and his companion by *io, tio*, they call the birds in concert. Mr. Boivin has taken the trouble to translate into verse this and all the other choruses. The following words, which is the burden of the chorus, addressed to the birds, expresses the meaning of the whole piece.

" Venez, avancez, hâtez-vous,

" Venez, volez, accourez tous."

A C T II.

PISTHETERUS.

Do you see any thing like a bird?

EVELPIS.

No, faith, not I; though I stare with my eyes and mouth wide open †.

This is spoke in their eager impatience to see a great multitude of birds arrive; and they begin already to abuse Tereus. But, presently after, they hear him cry like a lapwing, and perceive the first bird; for they all come one after another, rank and file, to give room for a thousand pleasantries. The two Athenians, who stand a little aside, eye the first. "Is this a peacock?" say

* Progne, who was the wife of Tereus, and mother of Itys. The common opinion is, that it was Philomela, sister to Progne, who was changed into a nightingale, and Progne into a swallow. But Aristophanes and his scholiast say, that Progne was the nightingale. Aristophanes is not the only

one; for our three tragic poets are of that opinion, at least they say that Philomel was the mother of Itys.

† Thus Strapliades stares to no purpose: he never sees the clouds till they cover the stage. Aristophanes often imitates himself.

they.

they. "It is no common bird, replies Tereus; but a bird of high descent, a bird of the marshes." It is obvious that Aristophanes hints at some citizen; but who, the audience alone knew. Another appears—"This is also, says he, a very rare bird, and comes from a foreign country." Here is described some citizen of foreign extraction, as was Execestides. For the mask, although shaped like the head of a bird, represented by its air the person whom the poet intended to expose to public derision. This scene is very lively, and abounds in wit and satire, which is kept up as well by the astonishment of the two Athenians, who make their remarks upon every bird, as by the allegorical answers of Tereus.

PISTHETERUS.

What impertinent bird of the mountains is that which stalks so haughtily, like a poet?

TEREUS.

That is the bird of Media.

[Here he paints the pride of the Persians. He will speak of it again in the sequel, and not without reason. It was by the advice of Alcibiades that Lacedemon made an alliance with Persia.]

PISTHETERUS.

A Mede, without his camel! How the duce could he fly hither?

EVELPIS.

Ay, and that other with his lapwing.

PISTHETERUS.

What a strange-crested animal it is! I see then you are not the only high-crested laping, Mr. Tereus?

TEREUS.

No, no; but he is the *Tereus* of the poet Philocles; *that* of Sophocles is his father, and I am his grandfather.

[This severe hint has been applied to Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and to Hipponicus the son of Callias.]

PISTHETERUS.

O Neptune! how this fellow has grubbled! What is his name?

TEREUS.

T E R E U S.

He is called a tame drake.

E V E L P I S.

Oh then this is Cleonymus *. But if 'tis he, how happens it that he has not lost his plume and crest?

[After several birds have passed in review, all of whom have some relation to certain well known Athenians. The two actors, surpris'd to see a cloud of birds, which fills the whole theatre, augment the liveliness of the scene by their exclamations of astonishment, and the humorous names they give to each bird, pointing to them with their fingers: for the birds are all different, and come in such numbers (whether several were only paintings; as Mr. Boivin conjectures, or whether the Chorus was increased by mutes), that the scene must be equally striking and pleasant, especially as the satire falls upon the people of Athens and Lacedæmon, metamorphos'd into flights of starlings, blackbirds, jays, &c. In other respects, we must not be surpris'd that Aristophanes wanders sometimes from his principal object in this piece, to scatter the salt of the satire on every side. It is a common custom with him; yet still we may trace his reigning plan.

As soon as they have ceased laughing, the bird Corypheus speaks, and asks, who had assembled them, and for what reason? "I, says Tereus, for the public good, which two mortals are come to procure for us birds." "Two mortals! cry the chorus: O, thou traitor, thou hast delivered us into the hands of our enemies!" Immediately the birds, growing furious, pronounce sentence of death against the two Athenians, and already prepare to put their sentence in execution. There are two other scenes of the same taste with these; one in the *Acharnians*, who attempt to stone Diceopolis; and the other in the *Wasps*, who endeavour to pierce Bdelycleon and his attendants with their stings. I must intreat the reader to observe the resemblance these several plays have of each other; for it is by this that the genius of the poet is known. These two men now utter their ludicrous complaints after the manner of Aristophanes.]

* Cleonymus (as has been mentioned more than once) had fled in a battle, and had lost his casque and buckler. It is probable he fell down in the dirt, as Mr. Boivin has very judiciously concluded.

THE BIRDS.

321

PISTHETERUS.

Alas, we are dead men!

EVELPIS.

"Tis you that are the cause of all our misfortunes: what did you bring me hither for?

PISTHETERUS.

To bear me company.

EVELPIS.

Ay, to see me weep, I warrant you.

PISTHETERUS.

Weep! Why you jest, surely.

EVELPIS.

Not I, indeed.

PISTHETERUS.

Pray, how are you to weep when your eyes are pick'd out of your head*?

The birds, whose rage is not less grotesque and wild than the fright the two men are in, encourage one another to set upon them, range themselves in order of battle, and begin to shew that they have beaks and talons. Evelpis attempts to run away; but his friend holds him, advising him to stand his ground. "Take up one of those kettles," says he: "For what?" says the other.

PISTHETERUS.

To guard us against the owl.

Pistheterus supposes that the owl, the bird of Pallas and the Athenians, never does any mischief while the kettle is in sight. The humour of this expression is easily explained by the comedy of the *Knights*, and by many other pieces, where we have seen that Cleon and his imitators gained the people by giving entertainments. But to return to the birds with crooked talons: Pistheterus advises his friend to take a spit, instead of a sword, and a trencher for his buckler, as the only way to disperse them. A

* A stroke at Sophocles, and other poets, who represent Oedipus weeping, after he had pulled out his own eyes.

conceit low enough, and somewhat extravagant; but, nevertheless, extremely satirical on the taste of the Athenians. Evelpis swears it is a better stratagem than any that Nicias * ever thought of. The Chorus make an assault, using these words, *Strike, pierce, tear them to pieces.* This is the representation of a battle between the Lacedemonians and the Athenians. Tereus, in vain, intercedes for the two men, as the parents of Progne; that is, Athenians: (for Progne was the daughter of Pandion, as well as Philomela, and the former had been married to Tereus king of Thrace.) The name of an Athenian enrages the birds still more: an evident proof, that by the birds Aristophanes meant the Lacedemonians, and by Pistheterus the fugitive Alcibiades.

Tereus, by alledging the old maxim, That we should endeavour to profit by the instructions of our enemies, suspends the fury of the birds. The Chorus consent to give them the hearing, and Pistheterus says, pleasantly enough, "So, they begin to cool: now let us draw back a little." Then seeing that they were ready to make peace, "Let us lay down our casques and bucklers," says he, since they offer us a truce. Let us rather advance "towards our rampart of kitchen furniture, spit in hand, and look into the pot: we have no reason to run away now."

Alcibiades was one who loved good eating; and it is obvious, amidst all the buffoonery of Aristophanes, that he is the man here concerned, though the interpretation of the name Pistheterus will not agree with his character, which signifies a *faithful ally*, as Evelpis signifies *good hope*.

E V E L P I S.

Well—but suppose we should be kill'd, where shall we be bury'd?

P I S T H E T E R U S.

In the *Ceramique* ||, where they bury the brave men of Athens: and that we may be interred at the public expence, we will boldly tell them that we were killed in the country of the birds.

The Chorus, who had ranged themselves in order of battle, resume their former station, and question Tereus concerning the two strangers. He acquaints them with the scheme for building a city in the air: the thing to them appears incredible; but still

* Nicias understood the stratagems of war, and gave good proof of his abilities at the island of Melos. || A place where those Athenians who fell in battle were buried.

they

they are glad to hear it. Tereus exhorts them to fear nothing, and to lay aside the kitchen armour. But Pisthetherus says, maliciously, that he will have the same agreement made betwixt him and the birds as Pithecius * made with his wife; namely, that there shall be no scratching. The Chorus swear to perform it. "As we perform our promise, so may we overcome our rivals by the decision of the judges and spectators||; but if we deceive you, may we get the better by one vote only!"

To carry on the allegory to the end, a herald at arms steps between the two pretended armies, and commands the soldiers to return every one to his own home with his arms: a form always observed in truces. While the Chorus is reasoning on the subject, Pisthetherus talks of the speech he is to make, as a pastry-cook does of his work§. He enquires for a crown†: "Come," says one to him, "let us go to the feast?" "Not so," says he, "I am thinking of some surprising turn of eloquence."

"Ah—now I have it: certainly, gentlemen, your situation gives me great concern; you who have all been kings."

This expression, and all that follows, is remarkable enough, and confirms what has been said, that, by Pisthetherus, Alcibiades only can be meant; who advises the birds, that is, the Lacedemonians, to fortify a city, or, in other words, to fortify Decelia: for the Lacedemonians had been, if not kings, at least the chiefs of all Greece in the common wars. Athens itself never disputed an inch of ground with them, till after the Persian war.

The CHORUS *answer.*

We kings! of what, I pray you?

PISTHETHERUS.

Of every thing; and, first, of me, and this other Athenian: ye are likewise more ancient than Jupiter, Saturn, the Titans; nay, than the earth itself—

[All the cities of Greece were mad after a fabulous origin, such as went beyond all known antiquity: the Lacedemonians especially, as well as the Athenians.]

* The real name of an Athenian, altho' it signifies a monkey.

|| A plain proof that the judges did not decide concerning the plays, independant of the audience.

§ A satirical hint concerning the orators.

† It was customary to wear a crown when they made a public speech, or were at a feast.

THE BIRDS.

The CHORUS answer.

More ancient than the earth!

PISTHETERUS.

Yes, by Apollo.

CHORUS.

By Jove I know nothing of it.

Upon this Pistheterus, like the mock Doctor *, or the clown *Gareau* †, tells them a story of a cock and a bull; that they were, indeed, a very good sort of people, but without study. (The Lacedemonians were always more diligent in adorning the body than the mind.) For that if they had read *Æsop*, they would know that the *lark* was the most ancient of all the birds; and that when his father died, not knowing what sepulchre to give him, he buried him in his own skull: so that you, birds, are certainly more ancient than the Gods or men. Pistheterus goes still farther: he confirms the antiquity of the empire of the birds over the men, beyond that of the Gods, who had usurped it: he affirms, that the *cock* held the government of Persia before any king whatever: for this reason he is called the bird of Persia, and walks as stately as if he had the tiara on his head; and, by the remains of his former power, he wakes the artists at break of day. By such arguments, all of them satirical or full of buffoonery, Evelpis and Pistheterus endeavour to persuade the birds that they are originally kings of the universe. One or two more examples will suffice.

PISTHETERUS.

The authority of the birds has been so great, that in the Grecian states, where there were kings, a bird was always seen upon his sceptre, who shared in all the presents made to him.

EVELPIS.

I own I was ignorant of this custom; and was not a little astonished to see in our tragedies a bird on the sceptre of Priam, which watched *Lyficeratus* ‡, as if envious of the presents he received.

* When he talks Latin, and pretends to account for and explain Lucinda's malady.

† It is in the comedy of *Bergerac*.

‡ He was an Athenian general, according to some; but others say he was a tragic poet: but both were very greedy of presents.

PIST-

PISTHETERUS.

Ay; but the best of it is, that Jupiter himself, who now reigns, still bears the eagle on his head, although he himself is a king, his daughter Minerva an owl, and Apollo a hawk, like a huntsman.

EVELPIS.

By Ceres, you tell us strange things. But why are birds the emblems of divinities?

PISTHETERUS.

'Tis that they may have the first share in the sacrifices offered up to the Gods, and even to Jupiter himself. It is but lately that we have sworn by the Gods: we always used to swear by the birds. And * Lampo, to this day, swears by the goose, whenever he has a mind to cheat. Such was your sovereignty: but things are strangely altered.

He says, that birds are now treated like slaves; that a cruel war is carried on against them, as against savages; that they are pursued even to the temples; that an hundred contrivances are every day put in practice to catch them; that they are sold and bought; served up with every kind of sauce, with one in particular, in which is cheese, benjamin, and vinegar, and this mixed up with a sweeter seasoning, as if they meant to embalm them.

All this is evidently allegorical, and means the Lacedemonians, represented under the figure of birds. It is Alcibiades that speaks to them, and exaggerates the ill treatment of them by the Athenians, especially in the affair of Pyle. If we recollect all that has been said about it, and connect all the ideas, the enigma will not seem very obscure, and we shall have the pleasure of wholly unveiling it.

The Chorus groan at the recital of all these evils, and at the comparison of their former with their present state: but revive with the hope, founded on such a deliverer as Pistheterus, that is, Alcibiades.

Pistheterus comes to the point, and seeing the birds entirely prepossessed in his favour, says to them, "Build a strong city round about the earth with stout brick-walls, like those of Ba-

* By false pronunciation, saying, *ἡ τὸς* We have had a piece of the same kind of *χῆνα*, by the goose, for *ἡ τὸς Ζηνα*, by Jove. raillery with regard to Alcibiades's lisp.

" bylon.

" bylon. Then summon Jupiter to surrender his usurped empire:
 " If he refuses, declare a sacred war against him; and no longer
 " permit the Gods to debauch Alcmenas, Europas, and Semeles.
 " Thirdly, I would have an ambassador-bird dispatched to mor-
 " tals, to tell them, that, for the future, they are to sacrifice to
 " the birds as sovereign masters, before they dare to sacrifice to
 " the Gods."

He enters into a burlesque detail of the separation of the birds from the Gods; " for the former, says he, will be served first, according to their desire." Who is there that does not see the ridicule Aristophanes means to throw upon the ambition of the Lacedemonians, who affected to fortify *Decelia*, for no other reason than to obtain the sovereign power; which they indeed obtained, as may be seen at the end of the Peloponnesian war.

Tereus makes some objections as ridiculous as the remarks of *Euelpis*: but *Pisthaterus* goes on, without troubling himself to answer the difficulties proposed, except by drolleries; as when he says, " What, you are afraid of being taken for jackdaws dressed up, are you? Why, has not Mercury wings? Has not *Love* and *Victory* each a pair? Does not Homer compare *Iris* to a fearful dove?" An incontestable proof that Aristophanes, and his brother comedians, rallied the deities of Homer, and other fabulous writers, which he had permission to take off, and not the Gods who were known and worshipped after the custom of the country*. *Tereus* proposes a still stronger objection: " What if *Jove* should thunder?" says he. *Pisthaterus* pretends not to hear him, and gives an equivalent power to the birds over the men. " If these, says he, should refuse to acknowledge you for their kings, and obstinately prefer the Gods of *Olympus* before you, send flights of sparrows among them to ravage their country, and then let *Ceres* aid them if she can."

T E R E U S.

By Jove she will not meddle with it: you will see her find out an hundred pretences. [Alluding to the subterfuges of the magistrates of Athens in the scarcity of corn.]

P I S T H E T E R U S.

I have thought of another expedient: send a regiment of crows to pick out the eyes of the sheep and oxen, and let *Apollo* cure

* Vide the General Conclusion at the end.

them with his medicines. Where will we find money; for he always expects his fee for curing people?

EVELPIS.

Don't be in such a hurry: pray stay till I have sold my little yoke of oxen.

PISTHETERUS, *to the birds.*

But if men, who are more reasonable, acknowledge ye to be their divinities, and call ye their *terra*, their Neptune, and their life, you should load them with favours.

CHORUS.

Favours! of what sort, I pray?

PISTHETERUS.

They are troubled with great numbers of grasshoppers, that devour their vine-blossoms: now a detachment of owls will free them entirely. Then for the gnats, and other vermin, a squadron of thrushes will master them in an instant.

TEREUS.

Why this, indeed, is something. But how shall we enrich mankind? for they are fond of money above all things.

PISTHETERUS.

Good; by a small grain of divination, which they know how to use, you will teach them where the rich mines and good trading lies. Nay, more, not a ship shall be lost at sea.

CHORUS.

How so?

PISTHETERUS.

The bird, consulted, shall foretel it: "Do not go to sea; you will have bad weather." "Now go; all is fair."

EVELPIS, *aside.*

If this is the case, I'll buy a ship.—Enough—I'll be a merchant; for I have no inclination to stay among ye.

PISTHETERUS.

Yet more.—The birds shall discover to mankind the an-
cient

cient treasures hid in the bowels of the earth: for they know well where they lie. Is it not said every day, "Nobody knows " where my treasure lies, unless he be a bird?"

E V E L P I S, *aside.*

If this is the case, I will sell my vessel, and buy a spade. I had rather dig up vases full of gold.

C H O R U S.

But health lives among the Gods: how shall we procure that blessing for mankind?

P I S T H E T E R U S.

Pugh, pugh. Riches is worth as much as health: nobody is sick but when he has ill luck.

C H O R U S.

Yes; but a long and good old age, which they love so much, is still in Olympus. Shall we let the people all die young?

P I S T H E T E R U S.

Young! so far from it, that you shall add three hundred years to their life.

C H O R U S.

Where will you find them?

P I S T H E T E R U S.

Where! among yourselves. What, don't you know that the crow lives five times the age of man?

E V E L P I S, *speaking of the birds.*

Hang it, this same bird-government is better than that of Jupiter himself.

P I S T H E T E R U S.

An hundred times better. In the first place, here are no temples to build, no marble nor gilt doors: shrubs and chesnut-trees are the altars; and, for the birds of rank, there is the olive-tree. No pilgrimages to Delphos or Ammon. We have only to stand under some tree, with a little barley or corn, and with our hands present our offerings and vows; and we shall be heard at once for a handful of grain.

Under

Under the mask of this impiety, tolerated upon the theatre, a delicate mystery is concealed. The poet means, that the empire of the Lacedemonians is more tolerable than that of the Athenians; that the former, by an habitual, austere, and temperate life, would be less hurtful to the allies than the latter, who were accustomed to good living, and magnificence of building in every kind: but he conceals his meaning, as we have before said. It would not have been safe for him to have spoke more clearly in a commonwealth, so greedy after sovereignty as Athens.

The birds, dazzled by the fair promises of Pisthetherus, yield to his counsels: they take upon themselves the care of putting them in execution. Thus did the Lacedemonians do with Alcibiades, whose retreat and advices to them did more harm to his country, than his presence and genius had done them good.

Thus having resolved to build a city, and punctually follow the advice of Pisthetherus, Tereus says, "That they have no time to lose, and must not dally like Nicias." Nicias, not being able to break off the expedition to Sicily, had dallied and lengthened out the time as long as possible. He commanded in it against his will; and it may be seen that Aristophanes was of his opinion in this affair: for although he says not a word of it, yet the remainder of the whole play tends to shew the Athenians of what importance it was to prevent any designs of the Lacedemonians upon Decelia; and to quit all foreign enterprizes, in order to defend themselves in the heart of the state.

Tereus begs his new guests to enter into his nest, that is, his grotto. He asks them their name: they make a few humorous difficulties. The birds promise them wings, by the means of a certain root. The birds and they desire to see the consort of Tereus: she appears; they pay their respects to her, and the two strangers enter the grot with Tereus.

In regard to the fine speeches which Pisthetherus makes upon seeing Progne, whom we should more properly call Philomela, according to our notions, it will not be improper to take notice, that Alcibiades loved Timea, wife of Agis, and was loved by her, insomuch that he had a son by her*, whom she called Leoty-chides in public, and Alcibiades in private. The thing was so little concealed, that the Athenian hero said, in a joking way, that he had returned the queen's affection, that his race might reign

* Vide Plutarch, in Alcibiades.

over Lacedemon. But this hope came to nothing. Agis discovered the intrigue, and proving by an *alibi* that Leotychides was not his son, he disowned him, and the offspring of Alcibiades was excluded the royal succession. Perhaps Aristophanes is willing to insinuate the first suspicion of this piece of gallantry.

The Chorus, after a short compliment to Philomela, address the audience*; but the discourse is frequently interlarded with little pieces, as in the former plays. To invite the men to acknowledge the new Gods, the bird Corypheus paints to mortals the misery of the human condition, their weakness, their obscurity, the shortness of their lives, and what a pity it was that they were not birds. He bids them listen to the sublime truths he is going to unfold to them concerning the birth and origin of the world, assuring them that they may entirely quit Prodicus† and his philosophy. He affirms, that at first there were only Chaos, Night, Erebus, and Tartarus existing: that Night and Erebus produced an egg, out of which came Love, with wings of gold; and that he, in conjunction with the winged Chaos, had given birth to the bird-nation: that he then set on fire all matter which existed, and from the confusion of elements, the heavens, earth, and Gods were produced. From this he pretends to prove that the race of the birds *was* before the Gods themselves. And to justify his assertion that they came from Love, he alledges their having wings; nor does he forget the presents of birds which lovers make to one another. He maintains that the birds have the distribution of the seasons; some of whom, says he, (the cranes for instance) when they are about to retire to Libia, give notice that it is time *to sow, to return to port, to buy fur for Orestes‡* the robber, lest he should, in revenge for not doing it, strip them in their journey. Others, like the kite, shew by coming in fine weather, that it is the season for sheep-sheering. Others, like the swallow, tell you that it is time to change the fur robes for thinner garments. "We, says he, will hold the place of " Delphos, Dodona||, and Apollo." He enumerates many cir-

* ΠΑΡΑΒΑΣΙΣ.

† He has been spoke of in the Clouds.

‡ This Orestes must have been a robber of some note, since he is twice mentioned in this comedy.

|| Dodona, a city of Molossia. The prophetic grove consecrated to Jupiter was ad-

jacent to it, as well as the temple of that deity so famous for its oracles. The error of the prophetic doves has been already mentioned, which was occasioned by a Thessalian word, which signified both a dove and a woman. The oracles were delivered by ancient women.

cumstances to shew that nothing was undertaken without having first consulted the birds; that, in short, through mere custom, several things had got the name of bird among the Greeks. From whence he concludes, that men ought to raise altars to the birds, being assured that they should receive rewards without number, and beyond all their expectations. An encomium on the songs of Philomel (which Phrynicus, it is said, endeavoured to imitate) interrupts his discourse for a moment: but he begins anew with publishing an asylum to any criminal that would come and live in the city of the birds. This is a bold piece of satire, for he names the crimes and vices, and even the guilty people known at Athens; for example, a slave of Caria, who wanted to be called an Athenian, though he could bring no proof, "Let him come to us," say the birds: he shall chuse whom he pleases to be his ancestors, and shall have the right of a citizen." They treat still more severely those children who had rebelled against their fathers, the fugitive slaves marked on the shoulder, one Philemon, and one Spintharus Phrigians, and one Pisia a traitor. Nothing more sarcastick could be conveyed in raillery than this invitation to retire to the birds, to people the new city as the robbers peopled Rome. Aristophanes hereby casts an odious gloss upon the retreat of Alcibiades to Sparta, and upon Decelia.

The discourse, broke off a second time by the panegyrics upon the concert of birds, is again revived, and begins with boasting the advantages of having wings; that is, the satire begins again according to the custom of comick Chorusses. If men had wings, when any spectator was tired of the tragic scene, he could fly out of the circus. Patroclides would not have been so unfortunate as to let a noise and smell escape him which proved the occasion of so much laughter. Thus does the Chorus carry on its design with great acrimony; for this last stroke is at least as good if not better than the first. At last he falls on Deitrepheus, "who, says he, "having wings † of ozier only, is become chief of the tribunes and the cavalry: in a word, he is the highest crested cock that lives." See what it is to have wings!

† He was a maker of ozier baskets, and also of figures of willow.

THE BIRDS.

ACT III.

Pistheterus and Evelpis return upon the stage metamorphosed like birds, and laugh heartily at one another. The first calls the other the sketch of a bird, and he in return calls him a shorn black-bird. These *quolibets* are also allegorical. To explain them we need only compare Aristophanes' writings with one another. The goose signifies Lampo, who swore by the goose; and by the black-bird without his plumes is meant Callias, who suffered himself to be stripped*. Although the commentators say nothing about it, yet the conjecture is not less just, and shews that it is not without reason that this place is interpreted as an enigma. The two new birds seem to think their cloathing fits well upon them, and (as Eschylus says) *That their plumage was not strange to them, but quite natural.* This verse of Eschylus was become a proverb.

"What is to be done next? (says Tereus, who appears on a sudden.) We must give a pompous name to the city (replies Pistheterus) and sacrifice to the birds." He proposes to call it Sparta. A fresh proof that these birds were Lacedemonians. The name of Sparta frightens Tereus. They resolve to give it a name taken from the clouds and cuckows, *Nephelococcygia*. "O what a glorious name! (cries Tereus,) *Nephelococcygia!* is there not a city so called, where part of the riches of Theagenes and all of Eschines† are repositied?"

PISTHETERUS.

Yes, indeed, and be persuaded, that they are much more valuable than those in the plains of Phlegra‡, so famous for the extravagant tales of the battles between the Gods and the giants.

TEREUS.

O what a rich city! but what Divinity shall preside over it, and be our patron?

PISTHETERUS.

Let it be Minerva.

* We have seen these two strokes at the beginning of the second act, and in the first.

† The son of Sellus. Eschines and Theagenes boasted themselves rich, but without foundation; all their castles were built

in the air, as it is said to this day. Perhaps it is from hence that Ariosto has taken his idea of a country in the moon, where we may find all that is lost upon earth. Vide M. Ludovic Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, Canto 34, Stanza 73.

TEREUS.

TEREUS.

Good ! let it be Minerva. Really it will be a fine sight in a well-ordered city, to see a woman armed cap-a-pee for our patron, and Clifthenes *, with his distaff in his hand, for our citizen.

Here you may see many severe strokes in few words : but to return to the principal point. The city in the air is Decelia. One must indeed be blind not to see that in this piece the whole tends naturally to this end. The proof of this may be seen in the following words.

PISTHETERUS.

Who then shall we chuse to guard the fortress ?

TEREUS.

One of our birds of Persic origin, a warlike bird, the very chicken of Mars.

[The Lacedemonians reckoned upon the assistance of the king of Persia, with whom they had made an alliance by the advice of Alcibiades.]

PISTHETERUS, *laughing*.

Ah, my lord Chick, ha, ha, ha !

TEREUS.

Yes, Mars's game-cock, do not laugh at him. He is bred up in rocks and walls.

The poet means the mountains of Persia, which is the same as if he had said clearly, The Persians are so accustomed to their mountains, that they will easily preserve our citadel and walls. This is not the only place wherein Aristophanes rallies the Persians while enemies to Athens. I quoted one example in the *Acharnians*, Act I. Scene II. and III. He even speaks jestingly of the mountains of gold in Persia, alluding to their mines, and to the golden vases, which their kings made use of for their most servile occasions. In comparing Aristophanes with himself, the enigma which we examine ceases to be one.

Pistheterus, acting the architect, gives fifty ridiculous orders to Evelpis in a breath. " Run, fly about the air ; secure the masons

† There are few pieces of Aristophanes where this debauched Clifthenes escapes a stroke.

" that

" that are at work ; carry up some stones ; pull off your cloaths ;
 " beat up some mortar ; take the hod and trowel ; mount the
 " ladder ; break your neck ; range the guards in order ; blow the
 " fire ; then go to sleep ; send heralds, one down, the other up,
 " and then one to me."

E V E L P I S *.

That is, in other words, that you will stand still with your arms across, and weep if the whim should take you.

P I S T H E T E R U S.

Go, my dear friend ; go, I say, whither I send you, for nothing can be done without you. As for me I will stay below to call the priest, that we may begin the ceremony in honour of the new Divinities. Let them bring me a basket and bason.

The Chorus, very well satisfied with this homage, encourage the musicians. Pistheterus, after a few airs have been played, imposes silence on the crow ; that is to say to the masked actor who plays on the flute with his muzzle on. These flute-players tied their instruments with leather straps round their necks. " Mr. Priest, cries Pistheterus, sacrifice to our Gods." He obeys ; and, in naming the most singular of the chirping Divinities, makes a burlesque invocation, in which he dedicates the dove to Venus, the swan to Apollo, the eagle to Jupiter, the ostrich †, mother of Cleotrites, to Cybèle, and so on. As he makes use of the customary form of invocation : he not only prays for Nephelococcygia, but also for Chio, on account of the strict alliance this island maintained with Athens, who always gave it a place in the public prayers. Pistheterus laughs ; but the priest goes on, and invokes the hero-birds, or Demi-Gods : all mere raillery ; for he names such numbers, that Pistheterus orders him to have done, telling him that such a sacrifice as that will not fill the bellies of so many famished birds. This falls upon the Athenian heroes. A poet interrupts the sacrifice, who comes in, singing the praises of Nephelococcygia, which he says he is very well acquainted with. This is a piece of raillery upon those poets who lose themselves in the clouds. Pistheterus diverts himself at his expence. But the poet sings on, sometimes imitating Simonides, and sometimes Pindar. In short, Pistheterus, guessing what he meant, gives

* In the text it is Tereus who speaks. M. Boivin, who perceived this error, gives these lines to Pistheterus ; but I am per-

suaded they can belong to none but Evelpis. † Alluding to a nickname given to an Athenian woman.

him

him first a cloak, and then a waistcoat, to make him hold his peace; for he never ended his dithyrambics, till he had received what he wanted.

A soothsayer succeeds the poet. He forbids any one to touch the victim. He speaks of an oracle of Bacis * concerning Nepheleococcygia. They hiss him off the stage with his oracles, and treat him in the same manner as those of Cleon in the Knights. But he returns and obliges them to hear him; and his obscure oracle terminates in demanding a coat and a pair of shoes.

PISTHETERUS.

What! are the shoes part of the oracle?

The SOOTHSAYER, presenting the book.

There, read (*he continues reading.*) Item, a flagon of wine and the entrails of the victim.

PISTHETERUS.

What, are the entrails there too?

SOOTHSAYER.

Read, read.

Thus he goes on repeating the word read: but Pisthetherus, who would not be his dupe, snatches the book out of his hand, and immediately forges an oracle, condemning all importunate petitioners in the sacrifices to be well cudgelled.

SOOTHSAYER.

You jest surely.

PISTHETERUS, presenting the book.

There, read. (*He continues reading.*) Hem, spare him not, though he were an eagle, a Lampo, or the great Diopithes.

SOOTHSAYER.

Is that in the book?

PISTHETERUS.

Read, read.

In this manner he gets rid of him; but a mathematician takes the soothsayer's place: it is the famous astronomer and geometri-

* A famous soothsayer: there was many of that name.

cian *Meto*, for so he stiles himself. "I am that famous *Meto*, as well known in Greece as at Colonos.*" Aristophanes spares him no longer, but makes him talk most ridiculously of measuring the air; a sentence of Socrates, as we have before seen in the *Clouds*. He makes him assert several ridiculous things, such as making a square circle, &c. *Meto*, with his compass in his hand, pretends to draw a plan of the city on the stage, in the form of a star. *Pistheterus* gives him to understand, that a certain set of people, (meaning impostors,) were banished from the city of *Nepheleococcygia*, as from Lacedemon: but *Meto*, pretending not to understand him, they whip him off the stage. In this manner did Aristophanes treat the best men of his time.

Meto is succeeded by a magistrate, who tells him, that the administration of the city was given to him. They call him *Sardanapalus*, in derision of the corrupt measures of the Athenian magistrates.

P I S T H E T E R U S.

The administration of our city! Who conferred it upon you?

M A G I S T R A T E.

An unfortunate decree of *Teleas*.

P I S T H E T E R U S.

Hark ye, let us agree without any noise; you shall have something given you. Retire.

M A G I S T R A T E.

I agree upon these terms. Besides, I must summon an assembly. I had prepared something relating to the affair of *Pharnaces* †.

P I S T H E T E R U S, *beating him.*

There, there, that is what you want. This is the way we recompense people in this country. (This was equally true, both of Lacedemon and Athens. Ill usage was the common reward of services done to the state. The Lacedemonians themselves would fain have destroyed Alcibiades after he had served them at the expence of his country.)

* It is said he was not of that town of Attica; but he had left some monuments of his learning there. He was the author of the golden number. See what we have remarked concerning him in the *Clouds*.

† Lieutenant-general of the king of Persia. I know not what it alludes to. It is a stroke at the Persians, and governors, or surveyors.

MAGISTRATE.

What do you mean?

PISTHETERUS.

This is the assembly summoned upon the affair of Pharmaces.

MAGISTRATE.

Here, witnesses. What, strike a magistrate!

PISTHETERUS.

Depart, friend, and carry back your vases while you may; you had better believe me. Is it not provoking? What, send a surveyor into the city before it is dedicated!

(This relates to some anecdote concerning the avidity of the Athenians.)

A crier of edicts and laws gives notice, that he has ready money to sell to the rising city; but he does not meet with a better reception than the magistrate. This last however declares to Pisthetherus, that he must appear in a court of justice, and give an account of himself for having abused him. Pisthetherus, seeing himself besieged on every side, (for they all speak together,) goes first to one then to the other, and threatens them. However, at last they take to their heels; and the priest, vexed to see the sacrifice so long delayed, goes off the stage to offer up the victim to the Birds in some other place.

The Birds, remain and form the Interlude.

They rejoice at first seeing themselves honoured as Gods. (The ambition of the Lacedemonians was to govern all Greece.) After that they make a strange sort of edict, of which the following paragraph is the subject.

"Nothing is so much talked of now-a-days as the edict concerning Diagoras*. If any one will kill Diagoras, the Melian, he shall receive a talent for reward. As much shall be given to any one who kills one of the dead tyrants†. Now, to come to our edict, whoever will kill our enemy Philocrates, shall have a talent; and four times as much shall be given to

* He is mentioned elsewhere. See the Clouds.

† A drollery, alluding to a real edict which was published.

"any one who will take him alive." All the rest is raillery upon this Philocrates, who was a famous traitor, and whom the Birds accuse of ensnaring them in his nets, of larding and twisting them in twenty different shapes to make them sell the better. Perhaps there is not much in this; yet still there may be an allegory relating to the captives of Pylus, who were very ill treated: a thing which the Lacedemonians always laid to heart.

As to Diagoras of Melos, after that isle had been taken and plundered, he retreated to Athens, where he inveighed against the mysteries of Ceres, and was there condemned to die as an atheist, in the 17th year of the Peloponnesian war. He fled, and avoided the punishment by shipwreck.

The Chorus in lyric verses boast of their happy destiny. After that, turning towards the pit, they promise the judges (if they are favourable to the new comedy) a great number of golden owls*, that will make their nests and breed in their purses, with crooked talons that will serve to cheat when they are at the treasury, and open beaks with a good appetite for the feasts. But if they should refuse to give the prize to Aristophanes, let the judges take great care to have large *lunules* upon their heads, like the statues that were dressed up to keep off the dung of birds. The judges, it seems, were not much concerned at this humorous threat, for they placed this comedy in the second class after the *Guests* of Amiphius.

This act goes aside a little from the principal object, which is Lacedemon, Alcibiades, and Decelia. It seems entirely contrived for the ridicule of Athens, and the manners of her inhabitants. But Aristophanes not only made this his custom, but had the art to deviate now and then from his subject, and conceal his raileries. What he has said in an hundred different places was enough to make himself understood, without shocking the Athenian delicacy, upon so ticklish an affair.

ACT IV.

"Birds, says Pistheterus, the sacrifice has been a fortunate one; but I see no courier coming to tell us what state our city is in." He has scarce uttered these words when the express

* The stamp of the Athenian money.

arrives,

arrives, quite out of breath*: he pronounces Nephelococcygia to be the most beautiful object in the world; that the wall is so large, that two chariots abreast, one of Theagenes, the other of Proxemides†, though drawn by horses as big as the Trojan horse, or that of Bronze, in the citadel of Athens, might pass over it with ease. To heighten the wonder, the courier tells them, that the whole was constructed by the birds alone; every one employing his particular talent, the cranes with the stones they had swallowed, the aquatic birds in bringing water, &c. &c. Another courier arrives, and alarms them concerning a winged divinity, who had entered the city, having cunningly flew into it without the knowledge of the guard of jays. (Is not this Alcibiades who is mentioned. They have given him a number of birds at his heels.) The Chorus stand close together and prepare for a war with the Gods of Olympus. Iris descends. The bird-archers surround her; and Pistheterus pretending to be in a great hurry, stops her. "Who goes there? where are you going? whence come you?" "stand still, what are you called, Galley or Bark?"

I R I S.

I am the light-footed Iris.

P I S T H E T E R U S, *briskly without, bearing her.*

A Salaminian or Parale Galley?

The allusion to the Salaminian galley which went to fetch Alcibiades from Sicily, is too obvious to escape notice. The common gallies on the coast of Attica were called Parales. The conversation betwixt Iris and Pistheterus is lively and comical; but always alludes to the affair of Alcibiades. Pistheterus pretends to be angry that the Goddess has presumed to press through a foreign city without telling how, without passport, and without leave. She treats him as a madman. The new governor tells her, that though she thinks herself immortal, she nevertheless deserves death; and that she and all the Gods ought to obey the Birds. (This is Lacedemon speaking to Athens.) Iris shews her

* The sudden appearance of actors himself off by a joke, or piece of drollery. when wanted; are apparently the subject of † Two famous Athenians, whose equi- raillery with this poet. He himself makes pages probably made a great noise at no difficulty about it, as he easily brings Athens.

commission to pass from Olympus to the earth, to engage the men to sacrifice to the Gods. "To what Gods?" says Pisthæterus: "A fine question truly!" says she, to us the inhabitants of heaven. "You Gods," replies the former. "And what others are there?" answers Iris. "Know," says he to her, "that the birds are now the Deities of mortals, and it is to them that they must sacrifice, and not to Jupiter."

These strokes of raillery fall much more upon the Lacedæmonians and Socrates and his followers, than upon the Gods. I say on the Lacedæmonians, whose unbounded ambition for power Aristophanes here ridicules an ambition which was heightened by the retreat of Alcibiades, and by the design of fortifying Decelia. I added upon Socrates and his disciples, who introduced, as is said, other divinities than those of the country, and whom the poet*, in his plays, often accuses of having no other Gods than the clouds, the air, and their contents.

Iris, very much offended with the impiety of Pisthæterus, which must appear quite new to her, threatens him with thunder: but Pisthæterus, muttering a sentence of Euripides in *Alcestes*†, asks her, as Phereus did his son, "Whether she mistook him for some Lydian, or for a slave of Phrygia?" And he in his turn threatens Jupiter with a plague of birds. All this is said in parody of *Æschylus*, to answer the high strain the Goddess had assumed; and the scene closes with no very civil dismissal of her. It now remains to see the deputy that was sent to the men. He returns like a true tragic narrator, saying many things in a seeming hurry, without ever coming to the point. He adds, briskly, "Bid me be silent." These are parodies which cannot well be justified. Aristophanes triumphs when he rallies the poets of his time; and he does it every where with an affectation which shews that parody was the soul of the ancient comedy.

The deputy begins his discourse, and protests to Pisthæterus that the men have the most profound veneration for him. For why? On account of the interest they have in the new aerial city:

* He is in the wrong, for Socrates acknowledged a God: but he went farther than the Athenians, who distinguished betwixt the fabulous, and the plurality

of Gods, rejecting one and admitting the other.

† See *Alcestes*, Act III. Scene V.

"Before

"Before the foundation of Nephelococcygia, says he, they were
 "madly fond of Lacedemon, and its customs. Cultivating the
 "beard, fasting, severe and harsh in their discourse, carrying a
 "staff in their hands, such was the public folly." (We must
 observe, that Alcibiades, after his retreat to Sparta, lived in that
 manner *; and that, in conforming himself to the customs of the
 Lacedemonians, he had gained them to his side.) "But they
 "are now quite altered; they are mad for the birds. They have
 "such a taste for their manners, that they imitate them like
 "monkeys. In the first place they get out of their nest early
 "in the morning to fly to the bar, as we do to the fields: then
 "again they peck at law writings, and feast upon an action.
 "They go so far as to give themselves the names of birds. Do
 "you know the lame tavern-keeper? he is now called Partridge:
 "and Menippus? he is a swallow: and the one eyed Opuntian?
 "he is a crow: and Philocles? he is a lark: and Theagenes?
 "a gossin: and Lycurgus? a cuckow: and Chairephon? † a
 "bat: and the Syracusan? a pye: and Midias? a quail. This
 "is not all: the passion they have for the birds is expressed in
 "every song. Nothing is found in them but swallows, nightin-
 "gales, gossins, and doves: at least wings, or a little plumage are
 "to be found in all verses; such is the taste. Besides, I can as-
 "sure you, that upwards of ten thousand mortals are coming to
 "demand beaks and talons: lay in a good stock of these com-
 "modities I advise you."

PISTHETERUS.

You are in the right. Hola there, some body bring a large
 basket full of wings, &c.

The Chorus sings their own praises and conquests. Pisthe-
 terus interrupts them in a great hurry, ordering the valets to
 bring him a quantity of wings. At last comes a young gentleman
 tired of the jurisdiction of a father, pretty near his end: he de-
 mands the first pair of wings. He wants to be a bird, that he
 may have a right, as the birds have, to free himself from a father,

* See Plutarch, whom I have quoted
 about this affair, and Cornelius Nepos.

† The friend of Socrates, known by
 the Clouds and other places.

who lived too much in his own way. This is horrible; and Pisthetherus, in rallying him, makes him perceive the wickedness of his sentiments. However he gives him the accoutrements of a bird-warrior. "Fly, says he, to Thrace and fight." (Amphipolis was then besieged. *Thucyd.* l. 7.)

Cinesias the lame dithyrambic poet, whom Aristophanes has so often burlesqued, comes in quest of a pair of wings; but he says they must be poetical. And he demands them poetically, in a strange kind of an ode. He alledges that his art is founded upon clouds, tempests, winds, and storms; and, what is worse, he endeavours to prove it, without mercy to the ears of the impatient Pisthetherus, who, to put an end to his noise, directly dresses him like a bird, but not without abuse.

A bailiff or informer, ill enough dressed, comes to the distribution of the wings. They ask him what he wants them for, whether it is to go to Pellena, a town of Achaia, in Peloponnesus, where they had games in honour of Mercury, the God of thieves. "No," says he; "I exercise my trade of bailiff in islands only." (Here is the exploit given to Alcibiades in Sicily very clearly described.) The bailiff says he wants wings to fly from one city to another, in quest of adventures; and to avoid the thieves* at law at his return.

PISTHETHERUS.

What, is that your business! At your age to amuse yourself with cavilling with strangers!

BAILIFF.

What must I do? I cannot dig.

PISTHETHERUS.

Is there no professions that you may live by more polite and more suitable to a man of your size, than the trade of an informer?

* The Athenians were so fond of law- the commonwealth passed even to monar-
suits, that when they could they stole chies.
them from one another. This taste of

BAILIFF.

BAILIFF.

No advice, pray; give me wings.

PISTHETERUS.

Hey day, is not this good council wings?

BAILIFF.

How! What are words wings then?

Aristophanes, in this dialogue, hints at Socrates, who said that conversation lent wings to the mind, and such things. The bailiff, instead of giving up his point, determines to live a lawyer; because, that in his family, pleading had descended from father to son; "Give me, says he, a pair of wings as swift as a hawk's, that I may be in a capacity to fly to the provinces to summon them to revolt against Athens, that I may accuse them, and then to return back to them again; so that---

PISTHETERUS.

I understand you: that the stranger may be condemned before he is heard.

BAILIFF.

You have it.

PISTHETERUS.

And that on your return, whilst he is trotting to Athens, you may seize his goods.

(In this manner they treated Alcibiades, who was unjustly condemned: but this frequently happened at Athens.)

BAILIFF.

You have guessed it. In a word, I would be as nimble as a gegg.

PIS-

PISTHETERUS.

A gegg, that is well expressed. I have some excellent wings of Corcyra. (*He means a whip of Corsou, with which he give him several smart strokes and turns him out.*)

The Chorus having been flying about all this while, give an account of the miracles they had seen, and enigmatically describe Cleonymus, with his adventure of the lost buckler in the combat. In another allegory they describe the thefts of the hero Orestes, as they call him, meaning the robber mentioned some pages back. We shall see that the Chorus will fill up the spaces in the following act by the like relations, and all of them satirical.

A C T V.

The fifth act, however ridiculous and grotesque it may appear to us by the introduction of the conference of the deputed Gods with Pistheterus, will clearly confirm all that I have advanced concerning Decelia, if we give a little attention to it, and separate the principal from the adherent, and the general design from the occurring fallies of humour, as the audience did, though better acquainted with the facts than we.

Prometheus appears veiled in the city Nephelococcygia, trembling lest he should be recognized by the Divinities, Sol, or Jupiter, who would not pardon him for this journey. After a comic scene upon his fright, being obliged to unveil himself, that he might be known by Pistheterus, whom he intreats to cover him with an umbrello, before he speaks, lest the Gods should see him, he makes an application to those villains who think they do not sin if they sin in secret.

After this precaution, Prometheus, as the friend of mortals, declares that Jupiter is ruined: that he and the other Gods are dying with hunger: that since the foundation of Nephelococcygia, there had not the least smoke ascended to the heavens: that, in short, the foreign divinities, like the famished Illyrians, gnash their teeth, and threaten Jupiter with a general revolt, if he does not immediately clear the passage and open the commerce. For Aristophanes

phanes saw very plainly, that the Lacedemonians being once established in Decelia, would not fail to cut off all provision from Athens, which actually happened.

PISTHETERUS.

What! have you any foreign divinities above you?

(Alluding to the foreign allies of Athens in the Peloponnesian war. They sometimes gave laws to the republic, and sold their assistance to it very dear.)

PROMETHEUS.

Foreigners they are, without doubt; for they are of the same country as Exceestides.

PISTHETERUS.

Their names, if you please?

PROMETHEUS.

They are called Triballians, (that is to say parasites or impostors; and indeed, there was such a people of Thrace, bordering upon Mount Hemus, between the Upper and Lower Mœsia.) I acquaint you also that you will soon have ambassadors sent to you to treat of peace, some from Jupiter and some from the Triballians; but do not hear of any such thing, unless Jupiter consents to resign his sceptre to the Birds, and sovereignty to you in marriage*.

PISTHETERUS.

What Goddess is that?

* In the same manner Trygæus espouses Peace, or one of her companions, in the foregoing comedy of that name.

THE BIRDS.

PROMETHEUS.

A rare beauty, on whom depends thunder, policy, justice, wisdom, navigation, calumny, finances, and the three oboli which we give to the judges.

PISTHETERUS.

What! does all this depend on her?

PROMETHEUS.

Yes; if he yields her to you, you may boast of having every thing in your possession: this is what I wanted to tell you; for you are not unacquainted with my tenderness for the human race.

PISTHETERUS.

True, we are obliged to you for every steak we eat*.

PROMETHEUS.

And you know how mortally I hate the Gods.

PISTHETERUS.

Oh, very well.

PROMETHEUS.

Well, be assured, that in regard to them I am a true Timon†: but I must return. Give me my veil, that if perchance Jupiter sees me, he may take me for one of those that follow the sacred baskets in the feasts‡.

* Prometheus gave fire to men.

† A genteel sarcasm against the Grecian

‡ Timon the misanthropist, so well known by Lucian.

PISTHETERUS.

With all my heart; and take this folding chair along with you.

The Chorus, in the mean while, continue to relate what they have seen. This is a little tale concerning Pisander, who, say the birds, went one day into the cave of that forcerer Socrates, to endeavour to draw out of hell the courage which had fled from him. Chairephon, famished with hunger, hastened thither, allured by the smell of the sacrifice, like a bird of the night; and Pisander seeing him, thought it was his spirit that was come again. All the mystery of this allegory is, that Pisander, who has been mentioned more than once in the course of these comedies *, was a very timid soldier. Aristophanes means, that he had lost his courage; and that, hoping to retrieve it, he had made himself a disciple, and the dupe of Socrates.

Neptune and Hercules arrive with a Triballian deity; the poet makes them impertinent and ridiculous to the last degree in the following short scene; after which the allegory will be explained.

NEPTUNE.

Here we are in Nephelococcygia, the end of our embassy. Holla, you Triballian, what a left-handed fellow thou art! wilt thou never learn to hang thy cloke over thy right shoulder like a gentleman; or art thou not willing to imitate Laipfodias? [*He was an admiral: he plundered Himeræ† and Prasía‡, in the 18th year of the Peloponnesian war.*]

TRIBALLIAN.

Let me alone.

* See the Clouds, where he compares the house of Socrates to the caves of Trophonias.

† Himeræ, a Grecian city in Sicily, where there were hot baths.

‡ Prasía, a maritime town of Laconia.

NEPTUNE.

Go to, you are the most unpolite Deity I ever saw. Tell me, Hercules, what shall we do?

(The conversation of the ambassador resembles much the consultations of Mess. Bahis, Desfonandres, and Filerin of Moliere. Observe for the better explication of the allegory, that Neptune is chief of the embassy.)

HERCULES.

I have said it. I will instantly strangle that inhuman fellow who has thus immured the Gods.

NEPTUNE.

Yes, but we came as peace-makers.

HERCULES.

That's the very reason why I would strangle him as the shortest way.

Pistheterus appears dressed like a cook, like the old heroes of Homer, and orders a grand feast, the more to enrage the famished Deities; and what is very comical in the ancient customs, he hardly seems to take notice of the visit of the three Divinities, so busy he affects to be in ordering and preparing the feast, Hercules, smelling the savour of the victuals, says, like a true parasite, "What meat is that, I pray."

PISTHETERUS.

A few seditious birds who made attempts upon the public liberty, and are now punished. (*The allusion is obvious enough.*)

HERCULES.

You powder them with benjamin, I suppose. (*This is said allegorically.*)

PISTHE-

PISTHETERUS, *turning towards him suddenly*)

Ah, ah, my lord Hercules, is it you? what can I do to serve you?

HERCULES.

We come from the God to treat about peace.

PISTHETERUS, *pretending to speak to his servants.*

Oh, there is no oil in the phial. (*By this he means that he will not bear any such terms; the equivocation is lively in the Greek, which turns upon the words oil and compassion.*)

HERCULES.

You must always season the game.

(Pay the allies, or make a golden bridge for the enemies.)

Neptune speaks more clearly, and proposes conditions of the treaty; and first, he promises rain and fair weather. Pistheterus answers him by the following words, which I intreat the ingenious reader to observe carefully, supposing with me for a moment, that this man personates the Lacedemonians, or a man attached to their interests as was Alcibiades. "We did not begin the war, says he, and we are much inclined to peace: but it is upon condition, that Jupiter surrenders up his sceptre to us: upon these terms we will agree, and I invite the ambassadors to the feast."

Aristophanes had said in the comedy of Peace, that the Lacedemonians were not the principal cause of the Peloponnesian war: he repeats it here almost in the same words, but without naming the Lacedemonians. It is they then who are concerned, and the enigma is solved.

HERCULES, (*bearing him speak of a feast,*) says,

I am satisfied: I consent to it.

Nep-

Neptune remonstrates to Hercules that he is in a great hurry; and that he must be very much a slave to his appetite, to sacrifice his father's sceptre; but Pisitheterus, to gain over Hercules, shews him so many advantages in this alliance, that the great Alcides yields the sceptre. The Triballian Deity being asked, answers, in his barbarous language, that he consents also.

This article being granted by plurality of votes, Pisitheterus recollects one he had almost forgot: he is willing to leave Juno to Jupiter; but insists upon having the Goddess's Sovereignty in marriage.

The sceptre evidently means the primacy and command in the civil wars of Greece. Lacedemon had held it a long while, but she aspired higher: she affected the universal dominion of Greece. Upon this demand of Pisitheterus, the Divinities being enraged, feign as if they would break off the conference and go away.

Pisitheterus seems not at all concerned, but continues coldly to give orders about his allegorical saucers, the more to excite the appetite of the three famished Deities. In this condition were the Athenians, and the principal states of Greece. Such also had been the ambition of Athens, and each of them held it by turns; at least in part, without taking the hated title. This was the source of all the wars, and the cause of the ruin of Greece. A war of eighteen years carried on by both parties, and the enterprise of the conquest of Sicily by the former, made the whole body suffer, especially Athens.

Hercules, who wants his dinner, does not think it worth while to cavil about a woman: but Neptune gives him to understand, that he is most concerned in this affair as being the heir of Jupiter. Pisitheterus, who has a good opinion of Hercules, to overthrow this objection, tells him, that he is laughed at, for being only Jupiter's bastard: that he could not pretend to the inheritance of his father: that Minerva was the only legitimate heir: that Neptune, who had brought him to the war, by flattering him with vain hopes, would be the first to dispute the succession of the paternal throne; and such like reasons, the meaning of which allegory is not easily to be found out: nor indeed has any one attempted
to

to do it. However, I may safely assert that there is a meaning, and the following is the most probable.

Aristophanes would manifestly insinuate to the Athenians, and to all the Greeks, that it is their interest to make a good peace; and which cannot be done without civilly yielding the superiority to the Lacedemonians, of which they had been in possession time out of mind. We need only then name the masks, and see the original characters. Neptune and Minerva, honoured by the Athenians, represent, if I am not mistaken, the republic of Athens, at least Minerva does. Like her, Athens pretended to the right of superiority. Hercules, who was of Thebes, does he not represent that state? Jupiter, is he not Corinth, which made itself of so much consequence by being called Jupiter's Corinth? The Gods in general are certainly the Greeks, and the Triballi, the barbarians, allies of Athens, who could not have the superiority disputed for, in view.

The Triballian deputy consents to every thing, because he has no other interest in the war than his own private advantage. This conjecture appears to me to be worthy of being examined; and is too much united to the rest of the allegory, not to hazard it in this place; especially the reader knowing how to make a more natural application from this general key.

Hercules yields, and gives up the sovereignty, as does likewise the Triballian Deity. Neptune alone opposes it, but in vain. The greater number carry the day, and all three go to fetch the Goddesses to Pisitheterus. The Bird-Chorus take the opportunity of this interval to form a satyr against the orators, under pretence of relating what they saw extraordinary in their journey.

A courier arrives a moment afterwards, and begins to display in pompous verses and parodies, the approaching happiness of Pisitheterus. The Chorus continue the parody a little, at the expence of Euripides, concerning the graces of sovereignty, and advantages of this marriage. Pisitheterus thanks the Birds for their epithalamium; and seeing them in the dithyrambic strain, he exhorts them to sing the appendages of sovereignty, namely, thunder and lightning, with which he is to arm himself as a new Jupiter. The Chorus obey, and we may presume, (according to Mr.

Boi-

Boivin's remark,) that the music was accompanied with the noise of approaching thunder.

This comedy appeared to me to be worthy of being examined at large, in order to explain its secret springs, which makes it infinitely more curious and agreeable than if I had contented myself with considering it only as a simple comic decoration.

THE

THE
FEASTS of CERES
AND
PROSERPINE.*

COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Acted in the twenty-first year of the Peloponnesian war, and the first of the ninety-second olympiad, during the Dionysial festivals, Callias being Archon after Cleocritus. This date is founded upon mere conjectures, on the words of Aristophanes; for there are no prefaces or notes to throw any light upon it. M. Sam. Petit places it three years later, namely, on the fourth year of the same olympiad.

IN Athens, the feasts of Ceres and Proserpine lasted five days. Several mysterious ceremonies were performed during that time; at which no men were permitted to be present, as in the festival of the good Goddess among the Romans. The assembly is held in the temple, where the scene is laid.

There are two comedies of this name; and it is not certain whether they are two different pieces, or the same retouched and corrected. One passage quoted by A. Gellius, as from the piece first written, we find in this which we are now to examine; and another quoted by Athenæus, as from the revised comedy, is not to

* These two Goddesses, the mother and daughter, were called Thesmophores, à le-
gibus ferendis. Their festival was called Thesmophoria, and the women who celebra-
ted it Thesmophoria Zonai, which is the
Greek title of this comedy.

be met with in this ; from whence we may conclude, with Casaubon, that the piece we have is of the first writing. It succeeded so ill, that Euripides suffered no great prejudice by it ; for it is against him that Aristophanes lets loose all the poignancy of his satyrical humour : he is still more severe upon the women ; and on this account therefore we shall pass it over slightly, yet without omitting the four principal articles, which, in the discourse upon this head, we proposed to examine.

The subject in general is the festival of the two Goddeffes, which made a distinguished part of the worship of the Athenian women. They, being enemies to Euripides, take this opportunity to contrive among themselves some means of ruining him ; and he, to prevent his condemnation, makes use of many different stratagems. The design of the comic poet is to represent Euripides as a mean crafty man. He was then alive, but very old, as the poet Agathon tells him in the second act.

A C T I.

Mnesilochus, very angry to find himself forced out of his house before day, and in the winter, by the importunity of Euripides his kinsman, asks him whither he is going to lead him ? but Euripides, to avoid answering him plainly, has recourse to philosophical subtilties. " You cannot, says he, hear it, since you are going to see it." Mnesilochus obliges him to repeat what he had said. " I cannot, " you say, hear."

E U R I P I D E S.

That which you are going to see.

M N E S I L O C H U S.

And probably that which I am to see.

E U R I P I D E S.

You cannot hear.

From hence Mnesilochus concludes that he must have neither eyes nor ears. Euripides, like a philosopher, explains to him in a ridiculous manner the formation of the eye and ear ; upon which his kinsman exclaims, " What wonderful things do you teach me ! " see what we gain by conversing with philosophers." Aristophanes, we find, is resolved to make himself merry at the expence of

of philosophy and philosophers: his satire is particularly levelled at Euripides, at Anaxagoras his master, and Socrates his friend; for both the master and the friend having been accused of impiety, the comic poet's design in this piece, as well as in the comedy of the Frogs, was, to insinuate to his audience that Euripides was a little tainted.

This whole scene turns upon the same kind of low humour, till Euripides perceiving a servant belonging to the poet Agathon, to whose house he intended to go, intreats his kinsman to stop at the door, which he points out to him. The servant as mad as his master says, as he is coming out, "Ye people, keep a religious silence, for the choir of muses is now in my master's closet meditating new songs. Ye winds restrain your breath; ye waters stop your course." From all this we are to understand that Agathon is writing a new tragedy.

Euripides and Mnesilochus approach the servant, and desire him to give Agathon notice of their arrival. The servant tells them that his master will not make them wait long; for that it is not easy for a poet to make verses in the winter, if the sun does not shine. This is a satirical stroke against poor poets. Euripides here tells his kinsman the reason of his bringing him to Agathon. He has been informed, he says, that the women whom he has so often abused in his tragedies, were that very day, being the third of Ceres' festival, to enter a prosecution against him, and perhaps to condemn him to death: that to prevent this misfortune, he was come to intreat Agathon to disguise himself in a female habit, and mix among the assembly. This is a severe satire upon the effeminate Agathon; and upon all those men who disguised themselves like women, that they might procure admission to these mysterious ceremonies, as Clodius did afterwards, and was prosecuted for having assisted at the rites of the good Goddess at Rome. The whole turns upon this mad scheme which Aristophanes puts into the head of Euripides.

At length Agathon appears habited like a woman followed by a Chorus of the muses; or of other women besides the Chorus, whom we shall see in the sequel. He recites some verses with the air of a conceited and ignorant poet. This forms the interlude of the first act.

ACT II.

Mnesilochus rallies Agathon upon his disguise: Agathon defends it by alledging the examples of Anacreon, Alceus, and Phryn-

cus, who, says he, would never have made such fine verses if they had not been nice and finical in their dress. "No wonder then," says Mnesilochus that Philocles*, who was so nasty, made "filthy verses; that the wicked Xenocles made wicked ones; and that those of the insipid Theognis† were cold and unaffecting." Agathon makes use of this argument to justify his own affected airs. Euripides maintains that he is in the right, and declares that he himself when he was of Agathon's age did the same. He then makes known to him the occasion of his coming, and presses his request in some verses from one of his tragedies; for parody is the great art of Aristophanes, in this and in all his comedies. Euripides tells his friend what need he has of his assistance; but Agathon reminds him of a verse in the tragedy of Alcestes‡, where Admetus reproaching Pheres his father with cruelty, in suffering Alcestes to die instead of offering to satisfy the Fates by devoting the small remainder of his life, is thus answered by Pheres: "Life is dear to thee, and canst thou imagine that I am less fond of life than thou art?" Agathon therefore declares plainly that he will not mix in the assembly of women to preserve his friend.

Euripides, thus abandoned by Agathon, has recourse to his kinsman, who consents to go and defend him. Agathon lends him his habit, and Mnesilochus is immediately dressed like a woman. He insists upon Euripides binding himself by an oath to fly to his assistance if he should happen to be discovered. The poet swears by the Æther, the habitation of the king of Gods: a philosophical oath, with which Mnesilochus is not quite satisfied; therefore Euripides, to make him easy, says, with a little resentment, "Well then I swear by all the Gods." "Remember, resumes Mnesilo-

* A poet who has been already mentioned.

† Another poet, remarkable for the badness of his verses.

‡ See the tragedy of Alcestes, Act III. Scene V. We are not to suppose from these parodies, that the verses of Euripides were censured as bad; on the contrary, they serve to shew us that those verses made a strong impression, which appears by that line of the Hippolitus quoted likewise in this comedy, *My tongue and not my heart has sworn it.* I must intreat the reader to call to mind what has been said in the ob-

servations upon the Alcestes of Euripides, and to reflect that if what disgusts the moderns in that tragedy had given offence to an Athenian audience, Aristophanes, who never spared Euripides, would not have failed to decry it. Now this he has not done; therefore the arguments I urged in defence of the Alcestes subsist in all their force. As for the verses quoted here, although I should grant that Aristophanes censures them, which he does not, yet this would only strengthen the proof which I deduce from his silence with regard to all the rest.

"thus that your heart has sworn, and not your tongue only." This alludes to a line in the tragedy of Hippolitus. A moment afterwards are heard the cries of women in the temple of Ceres and Proserpine: they appear, and Euripides runs away. All the rest of the action is supposed to pass in this temple, which is opened to the view of the audience.

An Athenian woman advances followed by a Chorus of her companions: she invites them to celebrate the mysteries of the two Goddesses. This is performed in the manner of the Greek Chorusses, with the accustomed invocations. There is something humorous enough in the solemn imprecations which she who speaks for the rest obliges them to make. "Against those who form any design
"prejudicial to the people.---Of the female people (resumes she :)
"against those who are willing to make peace with the Persians*,
"or with Euripides: against those who ambitiously aspire to the
"supreme power; or raise up new tyrants to lord it over the
"people."

To these singular imprecations many others are added which relate particularly to women: as for example, against those who reveal a woman's producing a supposititious child, and the like. There are some other passages in this comedy which shew that this fraud was often practised in Athens. The Chorus ratify all these curses.

A C T III.

She who had first spoke publishes the result of the female senate. "This, says she†, was the subject of our consultation
"the preceding day; Timoclea was president, Lyfilla secretary,
"Sostrata pronounced our determinations, That we should hold
"an assembly on the third days of Ceres' festival, to deliberate
"upon the punishment to be inflicted upon our declared enemy
"Euripides. Who will speak?"

FIRST WOMAN.

I.

* The Persians were at that time at war with Athens.

† The usual form in public decrees.

Many examples of it are to be found in Thucydides and Demosthenes. Lucian has imitated this piece of humour.

SECOND

SECOND WOMAN.

Put this crown on then † before you speak of peace : silence. She scratches her head as the orators do : she looks as if she would give us a long harrangue.

THE FEMALE ORATOR.

Ladies, I swear by our great Goddeffes, that it is not ambition which moves me to speak at this time, but the grief and indignation I feel for the injuries you have suffered during a great number of years from Euripides, that son of a despicable herb-woman. Has he not loaded us with the grossest abuse ? has he not, in all his pieces, endeavoured to render us infamous ? and does he not expect to have crouded audiences to these vile satires ? He has accused us of adultery, incontinence, treachery, of loving wine, and of intemperance of tongue. According to him ‡, we are the greatest evil that man can be afflicted with.

She adds, that many husbands at their return from the representation of a tragedy of Euripides use their wives with great cruelty, and charge them with all sorts of wickedness : hence their suspicions, their unworthy cautions, bolts, bars, and Laconian keys. In conclusion, she declares that it is absolutely necessary Euripides should be put to death, either by poison, or some other way. The Chorus applaud the female orator, and raise her above Xenocles the son of Carcinus. This Xenocles was, in all probability, a famous orator who was both applauded and criticised.

Another woman rises up to speak. She says that she has nothing to add to what has been already alledged against Euripides, except a particular injury which he has done to her : that as she sells crowns for the Gods, the poet by his blasphemies, has ruined her trade, by persuading men that there are no Gods. Euripides, who was the friend of Socrates, had adopted his sentiments : but Socrates, though he denied a plurality of Gods, yet acknowledged one, and it is natural to believe that Euripides thought and spoke in the same manner. But the most cruel charge which Aristophanes brings against Euripides and Socrates is that of unbelief in matters of religion : an indirect charge which relates only to the Gods of the country ; for the Athenians, in other respects so free

† We shall find the same custom observed in the Female Orators. These two scenes of different comedies are satires a-

gainst the orators of that time.

‡ Alluding to a line in the tragedy of Hippolitus.

and such lovers of independance, that they would make themselves merry with the fabulous adventures of their Gods, yet would not endure any ridicule upon the worship of those very Gods who were honoured in their country. The Chorus, who are all enemies to Euripides, do not suffer this accusation to fall.

Mnesilochus, in his female habit, now rises up to speak. " I am not surpris'd, says he, at the rage you express against a poet who has abused you in his writings. May all my children perish, if I do not detest him equally with you. Nevertheless, I think we ought to compare and balance our arguments. We are alone, and we need not fear that our secrets will be revealed; therefore I will speak freely to you. Tell me then, I beseech you, why are we so excessively shocked at the reproach of a few trifling errors which Euripides has discovered in us, when we are conscious of so many crimes which he passes over in silence?"

This is a terrible satire against the sex; for the pretended woman acknowledges herself guilty of the most enormous wickedness. " Euripides, says he, is ignorant of our worst actions: he knows not our unfaithfulness to our husbands. If he has handled Phedra severely, what is that to us? He has not unveiled all our various stratagems, nor our dexterity in imposing supposititious children upon our husbands."

Mnesilochus, in this sarcastick manner, charges so many crimes upon the Athenian women, that they grow enraged, and load him with invectives for having dared to defend a poet who has chosen to represent so many Menalippa's and Phedra's in his tragedies, and not one Penelope. To this Mnesilochus answers, " Because there is no Penelope now: we are all Phedra's." He adds, that he has not said the thousandth part of the ill of them which he could say, and enlarges upon what he had omitted before, their murders, their parricides, poisons, and the like. Such is the character which Aristophanes has drawn of the Athenian women.

A man named Clisthenes, noted for his effeminacy, presents himself at the gate of the temple, and desires leave to communicate some important intelligence to the assembly. The women admit him, and he informs them that they have a man amongst them in disguise. Mnesilochus, to preserve himself from the rage of the women, takes refuge at the altar. He snatches an infant out of the arms of one of them, threatening to sacrifice it upon the altar, and he

discovers

discovers that this supposed infant is a vessel full of wine. Doubtful in what manner to give Euripides notice of his danger, he at last recollects the tragedy of Palamede *, where that warrior is supposed to have written his adventures upon some small branches of trees, and to have thrown them into the sea, with a hope that one of them might be found by Nauplius his father. Mnesilochus, in ridicule of this fiction, resolves to do the same: "But where shall I find branches? says he. Oh, instead of them, I will break these statues in pieces. Wood for wood: it is the same thing." He continues the parody even to the end, with the low buffoonery of an harlequin.

The Chorus, as usual, make a digression addressed to the audience. The design of this harangue is to prove, in a humorous manner, first, that it is folly and injustice to scandalize the female sex; "For if we are publick plagues, says she who speaks for the others, why do you marry us? Secondly, that women greatly excel men." This parallel is very satirical against those who are particularly named. "Naufimacha, for example, is superiour to Charminus: nothing is more clear. Cleophon is still wickeder than Salabaccha. Which of you for valour can be compared with Aristomache, that heroine of Marathon, or with Stratonice? Can any of those senators of the last year, who resigned their employments to others, be thought equal to Eubala? Confess then, gentlemen, that we are more virtuous than you. No woman is seen carried in a chariot drawn by two horses, after having robbed the publick treasury of fifty talents. If they do steal a few trifles from their husbands, it is with intention to restore them the same day. But amongst you, can we not point out cheats, buffoons, rakes, and spend-thrifts, who are not so capable as we are of keeping the possessions left them by their father? We know how at least to keep our baskets, our shuttles, and our distaffs; but how many of

* Some assert that Euripides wrote this tragedy after the death of Socrates; and that certain lines in which they applied to that philosopher as the poet intended, drew tears from the whole assembly. It is this circumstance which induced Sam. Petit to adopt the opinion of those who advance the time of Socrates' death to the third year of the 92d Olympiad, Glaucippus being Archon. With regard to the date of Pala-

mede, he was under a necessity of correcting, or rather of contradicting *Elien*; and therefore carries back the comedy of the *Feasts of Ceres* to the fourth year of the 92d Olympiad. But this foundation is too slight to build upon with any certainty; and after all, the matter is of very little importance.

† A little corn.

"our heroes have lost their arms, and thrown away their bucklers
"in battle?"

M. Paulmier * explains this passage admirably well, and fixes, with probability enough, the date of this comedy. It is, says he, nothing more than an enigma, which, under the feigned names of women, conceals, some recent affairs of state. The poet here alludes to the naval battle wherein Charminus was defeated near the isle of Sima, with the loss of six triremes by Antiochus the Lacedemonian in the 20th year of the Peloponnesian war, during the winter, and consequently according to appearances a little time before the representation of this comedy; for Charminus died at Samos the following year. Now, it was forbidden by the laws to ridicule the dead upon the stage, as is observed by the scholiast upon the comedy called *The Peace*. This comedy therefore must have been represented before the death of Charminus: but besides that this argument is not unanswerable, since Aristophanes sometimes violates this law of sparing the dead, it is plain that the poet, when he speaks of the senators, who, in the preceding year, resigned their employments to other persons, could only allude to the four hundred administrators of the republic †, who were established the same year, being the 20th of the war, upon the ruins of the democracy. Aristophanes reproaches the Athenians for having so tamely suffered it to be abolished.

The Chorus conclude with complaining against the men upon another article. They are for having honourable festivals and public ceremonies assigned for the mothers of celebrated men, to distinguish them from the mothers of bad citizens. "How is it possible," say the Chorus, to see without indignation the mother of Hyperbolus ‡ in white robes, with her hair flowing in ringlets down her neck, seated at the side of the mother of Lamachus?" From this passage two things may be concluded; first, that Hyperbolus was then alive; and that he was not killed till some months afterwards, with Charminus in the sedition of Samos; for it is probable that in obedience to the law, Aristophanes would have spared him if he had been dead. Secondly, that Aristophanes, altering his style here with regard to Lamachus, whom in his other pieces he had ridiculed, that great man had then performed some glorious actions which pleaded in his favour.

* *Exercitation.* Palmerii.

† See the *Fastes*.

‡ The seller of lamps.

A C T IV.

What remains is neither curious nor beautiful, at least it will appear so to us. Here we shall find nothing but parodies and low turns of wit, to render Euripides wholly ridiculous. Mnefilochus, impatient that he does not fly to his assistance, cries, "Is he ashamed of his insipid Palamede*? Well, let us think of if some of his other tragedies to draw him hither. Ha! nothing can be better imagined; let us counterfeit his Helen; I am clad in a robe exactly like hers." It must be observed, that the Chorus suffered Mnefilochus to remain no longer in quiet at the altar, which served him for a sanctuary, than till they could send to the Prytaneum for the wife of one of the magistrates, with lictors.

Mnefilochus, in the character of Helen, imagines he beholds Egypt and the Nile, as in the Helen of Euripides †, and makes a humorous scene with another woman, who does not comprehend this new stratagem. Euripides, who arrives that moment, enters into the spirit of this contrivance. He demands to be introduced, as the *Menelaus* in his tragedy; a jest in the same taste, to ridicule the recognition of Menelaus and Helen. "Is not, says he to the Chorus, the palace of Proteas, king of Egypt near this place?" One of the women replies, that he is certainly mad, for that Proteas has been dead ten years. This *quiproquo* resembles that of the poet Martial, whom the countess of Escarbagnus ‡ takes for another Martial, a maker of gloves. Proteas, the son of Epicles, and an Athenian general, had been present in the battle of Sybote § against the people of Corinth and Corcyra ||. He had besieged Methone ** in the first year of the Peloponnesian war: he must therefore have lived ten or eleven years afterwards.

While Euripides is carrying on his jest, the wife of one the magistrates arrives with a lictor ¶. This circumstance disconcerts the new Menelaus, who is very derois of carrying off his Helen. He

* Euripides could obtain only the second place for this tragedy, and was vanquished by Xenocles, which makes Elean exclaim violently against the judges on this occasion.

† See the tragedy of Helen, by Euripides.

‡ In Moliere.

§ Sybote, an Island before Leucs, in the

Ionian sea, near Epirus.

|| Thucydides, book first.

** Methone, a city of Peloponnesus, situated upon the eastern shore of Messenia.

¶ These lictors were Scythians; there were a thousand of them who kept guard in the city, and had their quarters in the market-place.

is obliged to retire; but he promises to return soon to her assistance, being well assured that he shall not be outdone in artifice and contrivance.

The female magistrate consigns Mnesilochus to the care of the lictor, by whom he is bound, with orders to keep him carefully, and to drive away all those who attempt to come near him. The Chorus flatter themselves with the hope of a signal vengeance, which they describe in the evolutions of their dance; but it would be difficult to give this a fuller explanation than the reader has already seen in the second discourse. What we think most worthy of notice in this passage is an expression of the Chorus relating to the fast observed on the third day of Ceres' festival: "A fast, say the Chorus, which is kept even by Pauson." This Pauson was a man reduced to great indigence, and who probably deserved his fate.

A C T V.

The lictor, a Scythian by nation, abuses Mnesilochus in barbarous Greek, and adds threats to his insults, with all the cruelty of an unfeeling guard. The prisoner takes it into his head to counterfeit the Andromeda of Euripides*, because he is bound as she was; and immediately Euripides enters as Perseus. The pretended Andromeda plays her part with humorous complaints against the Scythian, a monster more cruel than that which prepared to devour the true Andromeda: but Euripides having no success in the character of Perseus, he assumes that of Echo, another personage in the same tragedy. "I am Echo the babler, says he, who last year served Euripides so well in this place†. Groan then, my daughter."

M N E S I L O C H U S.

And do you take care to repeat my groans.

E U R I P I D E S *as the Echo*:

That is my business: begin.

* The Andromeda, a tragedy of Euripides which is lost, and is ridiculed by Aristophanes in this scene.

† Euripides, we find by this, gave the

public his tragedy of Andromeda the preceding year, being the 20th of the war; and represented it on the same theatre.

MNESILOCHUS.

Oh, sacred night, how tedious is thy course! how slowly dost thou roll thy chariot over the venerable Olympus!

EURIPIDES *as Echo*.

Olympus.

This is sufficient to shew us the spirit of this parody, and the malice of Aristophanes in exposing the exceptionable passages of the *Andromeda*. After a few more strokes of low humour, Euripides becomes Perseus again, and appears mounted as before; but this artifice succeeding no better than all the rest, he retires to a little distance, to consider of a new one. The interval is very short: he returns, and presents himself without any disguise: he offers to make peace with the ladies, promising never more to exclaim against the sex in his verses, upon condition that they will release his kinsman Mnesilochus; otherwise he threatens to discover all their irregularities to their husbands, when they return from the war. According to the several conjectures I have collected relating to the date of this comedy, the Athenians were then occupied in three different places. At Decelia, where they defended themselves against the incurious of Agis and the Lacedemonians, who had seized that post, which they afterwards recovered from them: at the siege of a city of Chio: and in a war near the Hellespont.

The women suffer themselves to be prevailed upon, or seem to be so, and accept the conditions offered them by the poet: but the question is, how to deceive the vigilance of the soldier who guards Mnesilochus. Euripides takes that care upon himself; and instantly appearing disguised like an old woman, he finds means to send away the licitor, and restores Mnesilochus to liberty.

This piece appears to have been exhibited at the Dionysial festivals, about the beginning of the spring; for we find that the following comedy was represented at the Lenean festivals, towards the end of autumn in the same year. Now it is certain that the two pieces were not acted during the same festival.

LYSIS.

LYSISTRATA*.

A

COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Represented the twenty-first year of the Peloponnesian war, and in the first of the ninety-second Olympiad, at the Lenæan festivals, Callias being Archon after Cleocritus†.

THIS comedy, as well in its plan as most of its circumstances, lies open to the censures of criticism; we neither can nor ought to dwell upon it: some scenes however we will slightly run over. The subject of it is peace, and the fiction of the same kind with that of the Female Orators. Lysistrata, wife of one of the principal magistrates of Athens, takes it into her head to oblige Greece to put an end to the war, and the means by which she proposes to accomplish her design, is to prevail upon all the women of the cities engaged in the war to live separate from their husbands till a general treaty is concluded. She has already concerted this conspiracy with the women of Athens, by arguments and discourses, and with the foreigners by messages. Every thing succeeds as she desires: on the day when they are to begin their enter-

* It is here called *Lysistrata*, and not *Lyfistrata*, that between two names very different from each other, a proper distinction may be made.

† This date is sufficiently certain: it is taken from one of those ancient monuments which in few words explains the subject of the piece, and was first made known to us by M. Kufter, who recovered it in an ancient manuscript. Such monuments deserve more credit than all the conjectures

of the learned: however Paulmier and Petit were not very far removed from the truth in their conjectures concerning the date of this comedy. The latter fixes the date of *Lysistrata* to the fourth year of the 92d olympiad, and consequently he was mistaken, and the former to the second year of the same olympiad. In the examination of this piece, it will appear plainly that it must have been acted in the course of these four years.

prize, the Athenian women seize the citadel, where the public treasure was kept, determined to let no more money be taken from thence for the expences of the war. The citadel is besieged; Lyfistrata defends it like the general of an army. One of those extraordinary magistrates who are created by the republic in times of difficulty and danger, endeavour in vain by menaces and prayers to prevail upon these female conspirators to lay aside their design. Mean time ambassadors arrive from Sparta: the Athenians are likewise obliged to name their plenipotentiaries; and Lyfistrata takes upon her to decide the differences of all Greece. After some debates, the treaty is concluded; all things are restored to their former order, and the piece concludes with an entertainment given by Lyfistrata.

The fable of this comedy, as well as that of the *Acharniensés*, of *Peace*, and the *Female Orators*, shew with what boldness Aristophanes treated the most delicate affairs of state in a public theatre. He would doubtless have been more deserving of our esteem, if he had not disgraced the noble freedom of his comic muse, by a shocking licentiousness, and by abominable pictures, which will always render him the horror and execration of every reader who has the least taste for modesty and delicacy of sentiment.

The first scene is contrived in a manner worthy of the most refined comedy: Lyfistrata is seen walking with a pensive air towards the citadel, as if her mind was intent upon some mighty project. She expects impatiently the arrival of the women whom she has summoned to meet this day, appointed for the execution of her designs. Calonice, a woman of a different character, gay, airy, and little skilled in politicks, forms a contrast, with the deep plotting Lyfistrata: she enquires into the cause of her pensiveness, and of the assembly she had summoned. Lyfistrata unfolds her scheme by degrees, and immediately several strangers from different cities arrive; among others, an illustrious Lacedemonian lady, named Lampito, the daughter, wife, and mother of a king; the daughter of Leotichidas, for she is the wife of Archidamus, and the mother of Agis. She is followed by a lady from Beotia, another from Corinth, and another from Scythia. After long consultation, and very minute discussions of their designs, Lyfistrata prevails upon them all to swear that they will faithfully observe the law she will propose to them: she herself pronounces the form of the oath, and the women repeat it word for word after her.

In this scene they mention their absent husbands. One says that her husband is guarding *Eucrates** in Thrace; a proverbial expression, to signify watching diligently over some person, or thing, which there is danger of losing. By this delicate, yet severe figure, Aristophanes would insinuate that many of the Athenian troops were employed in roaming about Thrace, to prevent the Chalcidians of that country from rising and abandoning the party of Athens, as they intended to do after the unsuccessful expedition of Sicily. It must be remembered here what has been frequently said concerning this expedition: It was likely to have ruined Athens, for when she had received such a check, her allies took off the mask, and entertained designs of abandoning her; therefore it was one of the principal cares of the republic to keep them in her interests, either by hope or fear.

Another woman says, that her husband has been seven months at Pylus. Pylus was distant from Lacedemon about twenty leagues, and was in effect a subject of contention which disunited all the hearts and all the interests of Greece: it was almost the only obstacle to the conclusion of a peace, because the Lacedemonians were determined to force that city from the Athenians, cost what it would; and the Athenians were as obstinately bent upon keeping it. It did not return under the dominion of its first masters till the 23d† year of the war, in the Archonship of Diocles; that is, about two years after the date of this piece. There is mention made also of the defection of the Milesians, at the instigation of Alcibiades. This revolt was quite recent‡.

Lampito insinuates, that as long as the Athenians have money, they will never be desirous of peace. It is certain that they still possessed great sums; nor had twenty years war, the unfortunate expedition of Sicily, and the usual expences incurred by so great a number of public games and theatrical exhibitions, been able to exhaust them. Suidas upon this passage says, that they had a reserve of a thousand talents in the citadel. In consequence, the Athenians, vain of their riches, and confiding in their power, had, for seven years, cheerfully supported that horrible war, which like a torrent, had overwhelmed all Greece.

* We have already seen in the comedy of the *Knights* that this *Eucrates* the treasurer had saved himself from a prosecution by flight. Aristophanes makes a proverb of it.

† Diodorus, Book 13.

‡ Thucydides places it in the beginning of the twentieth year of the war.

To this objection concerning money, Lyfistrata answers, that she has provided against that and every other difficulty; that the citadel, and the temple of Minerva, will, in a few moments be in the possession of the old women of Athens; and the Athenians be deprived of their treasure, which they considered as so secure a resource. She then exhorts the Lacedemonian lady to bind the conspiracy by an oath, which is a parody of that in the tragedy of the *Seven Chiefs before Thebes*, by Eschylus*. She herself repeats it; but, to heighten the humour of this passage, the women represent to Lyfistrata, that the seven warriors who besieged Thebes swore upon a victim sacrificed in a shield; and that a shield did not suit the ceremony of swearing to a peace. They confine themselves therefore to a cup full of wine, in which they declare they will not put one drop of water, and then they pronounce the oath.

In the scene by the Chorus, where the old men raise a pile of wood near the gate of the citadel, in order to force the women to come out, there are some sentiments of Euripides burlesqued: the taking of the citadel by Cleomenes the Lacedemonian†, is also mentioned. It was more than an age since this event happened: the citadel was at first called the city; for which reason it is called *the city* in this scene.

A Chorus of women fly to the assistance of their companions besieged in the citadel, bringing with them vessels full of water to extinguish the flames. Here a humorous conversation ensues, between the two Chorus's of old men and women, which is followed by a battle; the men attacking with fire, the women defending themselves with water.

The magistrate extraordinary, suddenly arrives, astonished at that tumultuous assembly of women and din of war, so like the wild extravagancies acted at the festivals of Bacchus, or Adonis. He mentions the orator Demostratus, who procured a decree for the Sicilian expedition, on the day destined to mourn for Adonis, which was considered as an unfortunate presage. He says, that it is not surprising that women should be wicked, since it is the men who give them examples of wickedness. The men now preparing to force the gates of the temple, Lyfistrata comes out, shews herself courageously to the guards, and breathes such an air of

* This is one of the sublimest passages of antiquity; it is cited by Longinus. See the *Seven Chiefs before Thebes*. Vol. II.

† Herodot. Terpsic.

defiance, that they are afraid to approach her. That instant she is followed by a croud of women, who put them all to flight. A conference ensues; Lysistrata declares that she has taken possession of the city and the treasures, "That Pisander, and others like him, "the four hundred administrators, who are always ready to excite "new commotions, may not have it in their power to raise tumults "and to rob the public." This is very bold. The Pisander here mentioned was remarkable for his * cowardice; his fear of arms was so extreme that it passed into a proverb, *More cowardly than Pisander*. He had the advantage of a noble stature, and he was as haughty as he was base: he wore a triple plume, and armour of extraordinary magnificence, in order to give him the appearance of a hero, although he had none of the qualities of one. He was called the Cnidian ass. Aristophanes often lashes him severely. Pisander fled from Athens in the 21st year * of the war, when the tyrannical government of the four hundred, in which he had a share, was abolished.

LYSISTRATA.

No, we will no longer suffer the public treasure to be plundered.

THE MAGISTRATE.

And what do you do but plunder it? you who carry it whither you please.

LYSISTRATA.

We are the guardians of it.

THE MAGISTRATE.

You its guardian!

LYSISTRATA.

Why should that surprise you? do not the women take care of the private estates of families?

THE MAGISTRATE.

The case is very different.

LYSISTRATA.

In what does that difference consist?

* Suidas after Xenophon.

VOL. III.

† Thucyd. B. 8.

A a a

L Y S I S T R A T A.

T H E M A G I S T R A T E.

Money is the finew of war.

L Y S I S T R A T A.

What occasion have we for war?

T H E M A G I S T R A T E.

It is necessary to secure the safety of the republick.

L Y S I S T R A T A.

We undertake to preserve the republic by other methods.

T H E M A G I S T R A T E.

You!

L Y S I S T R A T A.

Yes, we.

T H E M A G I S T R A T E.

Truly the state would be in a dangerous way under your care.

Lysistrata relates, how, during the course of the war, the women, when they asked their husbands what was the result of their deliberations, if the war with Lacedemon was not to have an end, and what signified the decree which had been engraved upon the pillar *, received no other answers but imperious looks and haughty commands to attend their domestic affairs; but that notwithstanding, they perceived plainly the weak state to which the government was reduced, and therefore took the liberty to make remonstrances to their husbands with all gentleness and submission, concerning the fatal effects which must unavoidably follow from their rash resolutions; yet these humble remonstrances produced nothing but rage on the part of the men. At length hearing the cry continually throughout all Attica, that there were no men in the state who had any capacity for governing it well, the women thought it necessary to seize upon the government, and to preserve Greece in

* It was usual to engrave upon a pillar the treaties made with the enemies. Here perhaps the question is concerning the famous treaty concluded by the Athenians and Spartans in the tenth year of the Peloponnesian war, or rather concerning what was written under that decree by the advice of Alcibiades; it was this which re-kindled the war after many mutual suspicions. Thucyd. B. 5.

spite

spite of herself from her own fury. "But, (says this new heroine) "if you will condescend to listen to our prudent counsels, and remain quiet as we do, you shall be masters again, and we will resign up to you the administration of affairs."

The statesman is eager to answer; but the Athenian lady stops his mouth, and to throw still more ridicule upon him as well as the other administrators of the republick, she proposes to him to dress himself in a woman's habit, and tells him that he must pass through that humiliation, or renounce the government. Certainly in no state but that of Athens such freedom of language would have been allowed.

Lyfistrata, seconded by the Chorus of women, who are witnesses of her triumph, redoubles her sarcasms, and confounds the magistrate by the strength of her arguments; or rather by the bitter railleries with which she loads him. She maintains that the women only are able to re-establish the affairs of the commonwealth; and this she proves in a manner wholly burlesque. If the public affairs are really in the perplexed state they are supposed to be, the sex, accustomed to disintangle their threads, can reduce them all to order by dexterity and patience. That it is necessary to begin by imitating women in the working of wool; they cleanse it: so likewise must the state be purged of all those ambitious citizens, who, to raise themselves to the magistracy, commit the most horrible crimes; that afterwards all must be made even, all joined together, and all brought to concur in the common good. Metaphors like these could belong only to Aristophanes.

Towards the end of the comedy, the Spartan ambassadors come to propose peace. Lyfistrata, surrounded by the Lacedemonians and Athenians, who are obliged to have recourse to her as to their sovereign arbiter, explains the nature of their disputes. The Chorus of women exhort her to receive the Lacedemonians civilly, and not with haughtiness, as the Athenians did when they came to treat with them concerning Pylus, in the time of Cleon, and afterwards. She makes a speech to them, and begins with reminding the Spartans of the services they had received from Athens, particularly when Cymon * the son of Miltiades was sent to assist them against the Messenians with four thousand men. On the other side, she bids the Athenians remember all the kind offices they had received

* Aristophanes here, Thucyd. in his first book, and Plutarch in his life of Cymon.

from Lacedemon, and exhorts both parties to love each other. To this they readily consent; but at the same time the Lacedemonians insist upon having Pylus restored to them; and the Athenians are so far from granting them that place, that they in their turn demand Eschinus*, one of the cities in the gulph of Malea, and some fortresses in the territory of Megara. This demand throws the Spartan deputies into a violent rage. Lysistrata, without entering into any discussion of it, promises to settle all things amicably, and invites them to a feast. The piece concludes with several hymns.

* There was an Echinus in four different places, namely 1st. An island in the Egean sea. 2d. A city of Acarnania. 3d. A town of Phthiotis. 4th. A city in Africa. It is clear that it is not the last which the Athenians demanded, and it seems proba-

ble that it was the third, since a moment afterwards we find that they insist upon having likewise one of the cities in the gulph of Malea, which is a gulph of Phthiotis.

THE

T H E
F R O G S.

A
COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Acted in the twenty-sixth year of the Peloponnesian war, the third year of the ninety-third Olympiad, when Callius, after Antigenes, was Archon; as is evident from Aristophanes himself, and one of the sobolists.

THIS is the second piece Aristophanes composed against Euripides; who, in the Feasts of Ceres, is ridiculed as sly and subtle, but in the Frogs principally as a poet. Without entering here into discussions that are merely conjectural, and incapable of affording satisfaction to a sensible reader, it is certain that the comic poet hated Euripides, perhaps because the latter was the friend of Socrates; or he might have had some difference with Aristophanes, or the old proverb might have been as true as ever, That one great wit cannot endure another. This hatred breaks out sufficiently in all the comedies we have examined. It remains to examine whether the raillery is as just as it is severe.

A C T I.

Bacchus, attired like Hercules, with the club * in his hand, and the lion's skin upon his back, over these a purple habit with the tragick sock, enters upon the stage, followed by his servant Xanthias, who is introduced merely to make the people laugh; for he rides upon an ass, and carries upon his head a bundle of things, or his master's bed. He desires leave of his master to say something

* This dress, so improper for Bacchus, poet (perhaps of Euripides) who had introduced Bacchus in the same habit.

droll, to make the audience laugh; or something agreeable, to make them merry. "What you will, says Bacchus, provided you do not complain of your burthen." This first scene, in which are many low jokes and representations against the poets, who in like manner, had brought bundles upon the stage to make the audience laugh, is one of those the humour of which is lost to us; as is all that Bacchus says to his servant, to prove that the ass carries the whole burthen. There is only one remarkable expression which will recur again in what follows, upon the sea-fight in which the Athenians, under the conduct of Conon, that year shewed themselves superior to the Lacedemonians near Argilusa*: the slaves in that engagement performed wonders, on which account they were made free, and counted citizens of equal rank with those of Platea. In allusion to which, Xanthias says, that had he had the good fortune to have been in that engagement, he should not have been so miserable as he now is. This readiness in the Athenians to give the freedom of their city to slaves did not please Aristophanes.

Bacchus knocks at a door. Hercules opens it, and laughs to see Bacchus in his own dress. After some ridiculous, and not very decent words, the God of wine opens the design he has of going to the world beneath, to fetch back Euripides, because it was lamented that there were no good poets left at Athens†. "How!" replies Hercules, is not Jophon living?" He is the only tolerable one left, says Bacchus. Jophon was one of the sons of Sophocles: he inherited his father's writings, and made a good use of them. Aristophanes rallies him here by a commendation that is equivocal, making the God say, that he does not know whether the performances ascribed to the son were not written by the father; and he gives this as a reason why he would not bring back Sophocles from the regions below in preference to Euripides. He would be absolutely sure of the abilities of the son; otherwise, adds he, Euripides, as he is cunning, will not fail to desire to follow me; whereas Sophocles is, without doubt, as simple among the dead as he was with the living.

* Argilusa, a city of Æolis, opposite to the isle of Lesbos. This battle was fought when Callius successor of Antigones was Archon (Xenoph. l. i. Hellen.) This confirms the date given to this comedy. It is of little consequence for this engagement

to determine whether it was fought near to Argilusa, a city of Æolis, or very near the three Argunise islands of Strabo.

† Bacchus is interested in this, because tragedies were represented in his feasts,

Hercules goes on asking news concerning the tragic poets. "What is become of Agathon? Alas, he is dead. And of Xenocles and Pythangelus?" As these were indifferent poets, Xanthias, always bearing his burthen, says, with some humour, they are thought of, whilst I, who can do no more, am neglected: this is what he repeats without end. Bacchus, disposed to rally, attacks all the poets then living, "Who, says he, are but chatterers, swallows, corrupters of the true taste, men who want the power to produce such a strong sentence as this, * *My tongue hath sworn, my heart hath not.*" Aristophanes alludes here, as is evident, to Euripides. But he soon loses sight of him, to exhibit a very singular and very extraordinary spectacle. Bacchus would go to the shades. He enquires the way: he is told of several, the sword, poison, a precipice. All this is burlesque. At length Hercules informs him of the true road he pursued with Theseus, which is by Styx. He tells him he must pay Charon; which gives Bacchus an opportunity of making a reflection upon the omnipotence.

† " De ce rien precieux

" Plus puissant que l' amour qui peut tout sur les dieux."

Which makes the French Alcestis say to Charon,

‡ " Et ce n'est pas assez de payer sur la terre,

" It faut encor payer au-delà du trépas."

Alcides describes to Bacchus in proper colours all that he will see, the monsters that will present themselves, the place of the guilty souls, and the Elysian fields; which gives an opportunity of attacking two poets, by saying they must not expect to be seen there; for having spoke of the perjured, villains, parricides, and other inhabitants of Tartarus, he sends thither also those who should transcribe one single word from the poems of Morsimus, or should learn the Pyrrhic of Cinesias. In the Elysian fields, he places those who were initiated into the mysteries of Ceres; and Xanthias, who can think of nothing but the burthen which oppresses him, says, that he ought certainly to be there, as being the ass that carries the mysteries, that is, what is necessary to be initiated. These jests, which spare nothing profane or sacred, shew what was at that time the genius of comedy.

* A verse in the Hippolitus of Euripides, often censured. See Vol. I.

† La Fontaine.

‡ Alcest, Opera de Quinault.

Thus instructed, Bacchus takes his leave of Hercules, and orders Xanthias to take up his load, which he had just before laid down by his master's permission. He consents, however, it should be given to some dead passenger to carry for him: ridiculous conceit. A corps passes by, Bacchus advances towards it, and proposes the affair. The dead man answers gravely, that they must first agree about the price, and demands two drachmas without any abatement; for he swears he will rather live again than take nine oboli *, or three fourths of what he asked. Xanthias, enraged to find a dead man covetous, takes courage, and charges his shoulders once more with their burthen.

Charon appears (which must be very fantastical) and summons his passengers with a tragi-comic air: "Come all you who have left a state of misery and trouble, into a place of rest and happiness! who will enter into the happy regions of oblivion? &c." "I, says Bacchus." Charon, after some jokes had passed, admits him into his bark; but refuses to take his servant, unless he was in the last naval engagement: but as Xanthias was not there, he is forced to march along the side of Styx, and to wait for his master at a certain place appointed, where there were taverns; for Bacchus had taken care to inform himself well of the road, and of the public houses. He is compelled, in spite of himself, to take up an oar, and by way of recompence, it is promised him he shall hear the finest musick in the world. These new swans, as Charon calls them, are frogs, and these frogs make a Chorus. They were actors dressed like frogs, with masks made to resemble those poets Aristophanes intended to ridicule, if these actors appeared, for one scholiast says they did not. Their whole business consisted in croaking their frog notes, to enrage Bacchus †.

Tired with hearing them, at length he reaches the shore, pays Charon, and calls Xanthias, who runs to him quite out of breath, crying, Where are we? They are surrounded with darkness, and in a place of horror, where they see perjurers and parricides; but they do not at first discover the monsters which Hercules had discouraged of to frighten Bacchus. However, the servant supposes

* An allusion to some old miser; two drachms are 20 sols, or 12 oboles.

† Near the Arginuse islands.

‡ 'Tis this farcical scene, short as it is, that hath given the name to the whole

piece: whence I conclude, that there was much of sport and shew, to make the people laugh at the expence of some of the Athenian poets, or philosophers.

soon after that he perceived horrible ones, which furnishes him with sufficient matter for grimace and comic action; for the God who had swaggered before, now trembles with fear, and entreated one of his priests, whom he met with accidentally, to save him on condition of their drinking together. The spectre disappears, and Xanthias cries out, "We may well say, as the actor Hegeloque after the tempest, "we see a cat, I would say a calm." It is a verse in Euripides, where the Greek * word is equivocal in its sound. The actor had pronounced it wrong. Several other comic poets rallied Euripides on the same joke. This instance will suffice to shew what judgment we are to form of other the like jokes, which cannot affect us, and which I omit, that I may not appear tedious: for it is far from my design to write a commentary upon such minutiae as tire us, when from the thread and genius of the comedy, it is easy to see that it was written on purpose to ridicule Euripides. I hope, however, I may be permitted to say one word of the burlesque humour of this scene, which is, that Bacchus will not be recovered from his fright, till his servant swears to him that the spectre is vanished. Bacchus himself here adds a severe stroke† against his minister, as if he had been more frightened than his master: and when he complains of the God his enemy who had exposed him to this danger, he is told that it is æther, and other the like names by which Socrates and Euripides expressed the Deity. Aristophanes never loses sight of the philosophers and followers of Socrates.

The sound of a flute is heard, and the true Chorus appear ‡. It consists of the initiated, who celebrate the orgies of Bacchus; a circumstance agreeable to that time, for this comedy was represented at the Lenean Bacchanals, about the end of autumn, and in the fields. This Chorus, which divides itself into two demi-chorusses, is not void of detraction, particularly it drives away the

* Verse 279 of the tragedy of Orestes γαλῶν ὄρω I see the calm; γαλῶν ὄρω, I see a cat.

† A cruel stroke against the ministers of Bacchus. It is the fable which Aristophanes attacks, and at which he laughs with the Athenians; at the same time both he and they accused Socrates of impiety for not worshipping. See a passage from Plutarch, in the general conclusion.

‡ The Chorus of frogs, which has given

name to the play, is exhibited in one scene only, and appears no more, if it ever appeared at all. Another Chorus succeeds, to supply its place throughout the comedy. This is not new in Aristophanes, nor even amongst the writers of tragedy. The first Chorus in the Oedipus of Sophocles is different from all that follows: but it is new for the Chorus of one scene to give its name to a comedy, as in this of the Frogs.

profane; but it is not possible to explain every thing. He attacks the impious, bad comedians, the seditious, the misers, Archidemus* a stranger, who had some influence in the government; and particularly three debauchees, of whom the most infamous is Clisthenes. This satyric ceremony is an interlude.

A C T II.

Bacchus knocks at the palace of Pluto, by advice of his servant, who jokes and puns upon the form † and the valour of Hercules. Æacus opens to him, and mistaking Bacchus for Hercules, he flies into a passion: he loads him with abuse and threats for having stolen Cerberus, and shuts the door in his face till suitable preparations are made to punish him. The rest of the scene is employed in the meanest buffoonery, to express the timidity of Bacchus. He resolves to change cloaths with his servant, that he may no more be taken for Alcides.

When they had changed dress, a servant maid enters from Proserpine, who, having heard that Hercules was come to their world, invites him to a grand entertainment. This is introduced to ridicule the voraciousness of Hercules. Xanthias accepts of the invitation; and speaking to Bacchus as his servant, he commands him in his turn to take up the bundle; but the God, attracted by the smell of the victuals, endeavours to persuade his servant that he had changed habits with him only in jest, and forces him to appear as Xanthias, whilst he resumes the port of Hercules.

The Chorus make a reflection upon those who can thus transform themselves as they please. "To do this, requires some ingenuity, say they; and to be as clever at least as Theramenes." This Theramenes knew how to change with every wind, and was expert in conforming himself to the times. In public divisions he was an arrant Socia, a friend to all the world, and notorious for being so. Bacchus, who imitates him, congratulates himself on

* Archidemus was a considerable person in the republic, and at that time governed Decelia, (in the twenty-sixth year of the war. Xenoph. l. 1.) Aristophanes says humorously, "Shall we say nothing of this Archidemus, who for seven years has not yet shewn his teeth? I mean his claim to the title of citizen; notwithstanding he rules in the state." The word has a

double meaning in the original, which loses its beauty in modern languages. The ambiguity is in the difference between a child of seven years of age having no teeth, and a stranger possessing the privilege of a citizen for seven years without any title. The date of this piece is again confirmed by this passage.

† Σχήμα figure, λῆμα courage.

having

having taken up again his first disguise; but now behold fresh cause of terror. Two female publicans appear, one of which calls to her companion or servant, and says to her, looking on Bacchus, "Do not you recollect that parasite Hercules, who, stopping at our inn, devoured so much bread, and so much meat, &c. who paid us only with his threats, and took away all he could?"

Bacchus seems a stranger to what is said; but they are determined to make him understand, notwithstanding the tragic socks he wore on purpose to disguise him: they threatened to bring Cleon* and Hyperbolus, two Athenians, often accused by Aristophanes with the crime of embezzling public money, principally Cleon, who is his only object in the comedy of the Knights. The joke is, that these two women would commit the pretended Hercules, as a devourer and a thief, into the hands of two men notorious for their depredations and greediness. They were dead, and consequently in hell, where the scene is laid. The women go to fetch them, to try him for a robbery. 'Tis plain that Aristophanes here attacks the Hercules of † Euripides, or of some other poet. How many other allusions are there which it is impossible to trace through such a variety of fantastic turns?

Bacchus, finding that he was attacked in earnest, endeavours once more to compound the matter with his servant, to engage him to wear again his fatal ornaments; but Xanthias humorously retorts upon his master what he had said upon the last exchange: "I, a slave and a mortal! how is it possible I should be the son of Jupiter and Alcmena?" However, he suffers himself to be prevailed upon by his master's swearing that he would obey him as his servant, without murmuring, even though he should be beat. The oath

* The reader is already acquainted with these characters by the preceding comedies: here is one more stroke at Hyperbolus: he was a native of Perithous. Thucydides speaks of him as a bad man (l. 8.) He was the butt of the comic writers: he laughed at every thing, having a front of brass. The people made use of him when they were determined to destroy any one: they set him up against Alcibiades, that this great man might be banished by ostracism; but Alcibiades found means to unite the contending parties against Hy-

perbolus, who was banished by the same sentence, of whom Plato the comedian says,

"Quoque ses mœurs ayent en vérité
 "Cela & pis justement mérité,
 "Tant est que lui personne de si vile
 "Condition, & de race servile
 "N'en étoit pas digne; car inventé
 "Pour telles gens n'a l'Ostracisme été."

See Plutarch, in his Alcibiades.

† In his Alceſtis, where he is represented as a glutton. See Vol. II.

he takes is, that he, his wife, his children, and above all, the clear-eyed Archidemus, might perish. Xanthias takes courage, and assumes the appearance of Hercules, and presently Æacus returns. This infernal judge, attended by his guards, orders them to seize Xanthias as a thief; Xanthias denies that he ever carried off Cerberus, or ever descended into those regions before. His manner of proving this has humour in it. "Ask, says he, my servant; give him the question; and if you find me guilty, put me to death." The question, or torture, he himself proposed, is to tie Bacchus to a ladder, to hang him up, and give him the strap; to torment him an hundred different ways, either by putting vinegar to his nose, or by applying hot tiles: in a word, to make him undergo all the torments inflicted upon slaves, and not the punishment inflicted upon freemen, which was, to be beaten with the leaves of leeks and garlic. "Well, says Æacus, but if I mutilate your slave, must I pay for him? No," replies Xanthias, I give him up to you." Allusions to subjects we can know nothing of.

Bacchus, to draw himself out of this scrape, declares the truth, asserting himself to be the God Bacchus; and that he who pretended to be his master, was no other than a rascally slave disguised as a God. The force of this raillery, as is easy to discern, is levelled at those slaves who were become free, and made citizens of Athens: "For that very reason, says Xanthias, you should add to the torture; for if he is a God, he will not feel the pain." Bacchus proposes that the other should suffer as much, and the new Hercules accepts the condition. "Judge, says he, O Æacus! which of us is really the God by his patience." Æacus desires no better, and then the scene becomes strangely ridiculous; for they stripped in public these rivals for the strap. Æacus strikes first one, then the other, and remarks with some attention their cries and their looks; but they both excuse with some humour their sensibility as involuntary; the one saying that he thought of a verse of a certain poet, the other alledging a reason of like force: strokes extremely satyrical, which it is sufficient to have remarked, though we cannot unravel.

Æacus, not being able, by means of the strap, to distinguish which is the God, determines to have them before Pluto and Proserpine, who being Gods themselves, might better decide the difference. "That is well thought on, says Bacchus; but I could have wished you had taken this resolution a little sooner."

The

The act finishes with a part of the Chorus boldly attacking the republic, and certain individuals. They are enraged first against Cleophon, general of the Athenians. This passage shews that Cleophon had not yet been accused, as he afterwards was; but his disgrace drew near. He was killed in an * insurrection raised at Athens, on account of several generals and magistrates that had been imprisoned, and of whom, some, as Erasinus †, had been condemned. The people recovered themselves from their outrageous passion against so many great men, and Calixenes with some others escaped. It is said this Cleophon was a Thracian; and that the comic writer, Plato, had censured him as such in a comedy written against him. The Chorus, in effect, by charging here the government of Athens, with a freedom which cannot be too much admired, reproaches the Athenians with bestowing the first employments and most distinguished titles upon strangers, even slaves, for having assisted once in a naval engagement, which was that of the Arginusæ, already rallied by the poet; but then the raillery is more pointed in this place, and the reproach more directly aimed. The Chorus address thier speech to the people themselves, who, without doubt, repented a little their having been so ready to admit slaves of their family, as the poet expresses himself, and citizens, and priests, of a new fabrick, merely because they had been in an engagement at sea. They then fall upon certain individuals, whose punishment they foretel will not be long delayed. They described a bagnio-man, and principally one Cligines, who was an enemy to peace, and feigned himself mad, to be safe in the disturbance. The Chorus add, that they thought it would be right to pardon those who having been seduced by the artifice of Phrynicus, were now to pay for their offence; but would ask no favour for the rest. They compare the use that the republic made of its citizens to the opinion it had of ancient and modern coin. It made use of the modern, which was worth nothing, and neglected the old, which was good; moreover, the men of property, the old citizens, remained unemployed, whilst the upstarts were in fashion. Foreigners low born, often slaves, and such as one would hardly condescend to look down upon, these they sacrificed to the public. "Frantick, I say, you are, conclude they; change this perverse method, "make use of men of worth. Though you should suffer by it, your "pains will at least be more glorious and more mild ‡."

* Xenophon. l. 1.

† It was principally to him that Archidamus alluded, of whom we have already

spoken: he in effect ruined him.

‡ In the Greek it is *Χρησθῆναι τοῖς χρηστοῖσι*, *make use of the useful.*

A C T III.

This act opens with a scene of servants; for another character under the name of *Æacus*, viz. a servant of Pluto, appears with *Xanthias*, and says that in his opinion *Bacchus* seems to be a fine gentleman. "Yes, forsooth, replies the other, how can it be otherwise with him who is a stranger to every thing but wine and debauchery?" This is the best passage in the whole scene; the two servants discourse in this manner about their masters. A noise is heard; *Xanthias* asks what is the matter? Nothing, says Pluto's servant; 'tis only a quarrel between *Eschylus* and *Euripides*. Immediately he relates how that a law had been introduced into the world beneath; by which he who should excel in any considerable art was intitled to a seat near Pluto, and to have a voice in the court; or should be brought up at the *Prytaneum*, that is to say, at the public expence. The *Prytaneum* at Athens was, as it is said, a place for the assembly of fifty of the principal magistrates. These places and pensions were given to such as had distinguished themselves by any important service. The servant adds, that by this law, that place of honour was given to every one who should appear upon the list with a superior talent for poetry; also that *Æschylus* had long held the first place as a writer of tragedy; but that *Euripides*, being arrived here below, had shewn what he could do to cut-purses, to thieves, to villains, &c. the number of which is infinite: that these people had so extolled *Euripides*, that he, grown insolent with their suffrages in his favour, had supplanted *Eschylus*. "And has nobody drawn this usurper away, by flinging stones at him, says *Xanthias*?" This sometimes has been the fate of poets upon the stage, when stones were made use of instead of cat-calls. No, says the other servant; but the judgment who shall have the preference is to be determined by the voice of the public. "*Euripides* is very clever, says *Xanthias*: what then has not *Eschylus* his followers? No, replies the other; for there are now hardly any honest men among the dead any more than at Athens; but Pluto has decreed that there shall be a regular contest between the two rivals. But tell me, says *Xanthias* again, why would not *Sophocles* take the place of honour? He! so far from it, say they, that he embraced *Eschylus* upon his arrival here, and took him by the hand, though *Eschylus* would have given him the preference; but he will make his appearance soon as a spectator, ready to yield to *Eschylus*, if victorious: if not, to contend with

"Euripides." Pluto's servant says, at length, that they will weigh the tragedies of either author: that there has been a difficulty in determining who shall be judges*; for there are few that are good here: that Eschylus was too great a genius for the Athenians; so that he looked upon them as people unfit to judge of genius: that at least they were determined to leave the decision of this affair to the judgment of Bacchus.

The servants come on again, and the Chorus open this dispute with verses in the grand and sonorous style of Eschylus†. The verses of that great poet are compared to the roaring of a lion, and to the breath of a giant; but those of Euripides to the noise and rolling of a car upon the course. This is their true character.

"No, I will not yield," says Euripides angrily, as he enters. He immediately assigns a reason for this, and he objects to Æschylus's pompous exhibition of wonders, or rather monsters, with which his tragedies are inflated; his bloated eloquence, and the barbarity which reigns there, as in his own disposition.

Eschylus, in his turn, calls him the son of a female peasant, a maker of idle stories, and a dealer with beggars‡, cripples, and ragged people. Thus they are engaged each in his own stile. Bacchus, as moderator of the dispute, seeing Eschylus ready to speak, says pleasantly, "Come, bring us a black sheep, for there is a whirlwind coming that will produce a storm of words." This was because they believed that tempests might be appeased by a sacrifice. Æschylus begins with two verses of great energy; and Bacchus, to reprehend them both, advises Eschylus to be moderate, and not to throw down such huge words upon them; and Euripides he advises to get out of the way as fast as ever he can, lest, in a fit of enthusiasm his adversary should let fall upon him some striking verse, and therewith cracking his skull, let out Telephus§.

After some more words on the one side and the other, Bacchus orders the Chorus and the two poets to make their invocations, and burn incense before the combat; a tragi-comic ceremony, as well as the combat itself. It is in imitation of the ancient practice of

* This is a stroke upon those who set up for judges of tragedies and comedies.

† All the Chorusses of Aristophanes, or the greatest part of them, are in the Dithyrambic taste of the tragic Choruses, of

which they are often parodies.

‡ Euripides affected to represent things as they naturally were.

§ A tragedy of Euripides, now lost.

performing sacrifices and invocations before any causes of consequences were pleaded.

The Chorus address themselves to the Muses, Eschylus to Ceres, and Euripides to the Æther, to eloquence, and to pliancy; for Aristophanes treats him here as he would Socrates, and makes him worship new Deities unknown to the Athenians. The Chorus in the interim before the dispute, draw an exact picture of these rival poets in one word; for they expect to see on the one side elegance joined to politeness; and on the other side a deluge of splendid and magnificent words.

A C T IV.

The dispute begins. Euripides, agreeable to the character which Aristophanes is pleased to give him, attacks briskly, jumping and skirmishing: he instantly reproaches his adversary for his subjects, and his extraordinary characters, invented purely to surprise and to deceive the spectator, as in the instance of Achilles * and Niobe, wrapped up in their garments, and not speaking one word during the whole performance. Bacchus, in vain, said that he found this silence more beautiful than the discourse of the Athenian poets. This was by way of raillery: but Aristotle †, as well as Euripides, charges Eschylus with this fault. Euripides then objects to the extraordinary words his rival makes use of, which he resembles to monsters wrought in tapestry. He ascribes to himself the merit of having made tragedy speak in a more natural and human tone; and of having been the first who opened the piece simply and without art; and for continuing the action uninterrupted. He boasts the having taught the Athenians to speak properly, and to reason sensibly. He compares his disciples with those of Eschylus, and declares his to be the more accomplished, such as Clitophon and Theramenes. This is that supple and pliant Theramenes, of whom we have already spoken. In short, he claims the honour of having trained men to true prudence; that is to say, in the ill-natured turn Aristophanes is pleased to give it, artifice and cunning.

Eschylus now speaks in his turn, but in a thundering manner; ashamed to be obliged to contend with such an adversary, he asks him in what does the art of a poet consist? In making men better? replies Euripides. On which Eschylus undertakes to prove that

* Subject of a tragedy of Eschylus now lost, and which Aristophanes criticises.

† In his Art of Poetry.

he had made men worse than they were before; and that the Athenians, whom he had left, were, at the time of the birth of Euripides, brave, hardened to the fatigues of war, aspiring only after dangers, firmly attached to all their duties, and by no means so wicked and deceitful as at present. Eschylus was asked how he could make heroes of his citizens? "By the tragedy * of the *Seven Chiefs before Thebes*, replies he. No spectator ever went from the representation of it without having the ardour of war raised in his breast." This, in the opinion of Euripides, was doing no good service to his country; for the Thebans were thereby become themselves better soldiers. Then Eschylus appeals to his *Persians*; and says, that these were subjects worthy a poet; not your *Phædra's* and *Stenobea's* †. Here Bacchus throws out a cruel invective upon the ladies of Athens. "Indeed, says he to Euripides, you have taught the men and women of Athens, by your Bellerophon, to poison themselves." Stenobia was in love with Bellerophon; but he making no suitable returns, she became his accuser. The cheat was discovered, and she poisoned herself. Eschylus maintains that such subjects are pernicious examples; and that to shew a true regard to tragedy, the failings of humanity should be hid rather than exposed upon the stage. He justifies his overcharged style, by saying it was the proper language for Gods and heroes; whereas Euripides had degraded them, not only reducing them to the level of mortals, by a soft and popular language, but sometimes by cloathing them with rags, that they may appear with the concomitant of indigence; whence it happens, says he, that not a rich person now-a-days will hazard his effects upon the sea; but each one disguises himself and complains of want. He objects against his rival the having instructed men in the art of speaking deceitfully, and of arguing eternally; of having given even to sailors a species of wit, which they abuse: in short, of having made all the world extravagant and talkative ‡.

Bacchus here makes use of a singular expression, taken from those who have treated of the order of rowers in the ancient galleys. The

* Eschylus here appeals to two of his tragedies still extant, the *Seven Chiefs at the Siege of Thebes*, and the *Persians*. The reader may recollect the account given of them in the second volume; and he will find that we agree in one point with Aristophanes, that indeed these two tragedies are well calculated for improving a free

people with military ardor.

† Subjects of the same kind.

‡ This is sufficient to shew how much Euripides was in the fashion, when all the world, even the sailors, piqued themselves upon understanding the finest passages in the plays of Euripides.

scholiast (whether any thing has been added or not) does not favour the disposition of the rowers being arranged in stages one above another. With regard to the verse in Aristophanes, every one will give that sense to it which pleases him best *.

Eschylus insists upon the accusation he had before brought against his rival, for having introduced vicious characters instead of heroes: he also accuses him as if it were criminal in him to say, "That life was no other than a real state of death." How far would not Eschylus have carried his delicacy? and what would he not have said of the style in our times, if he blames that of Euripides on account of its simplicity? He adds, that hence have arisen a great number of scribblers and quacks with which Athens was even deluged, and who seduced the people by their vain discourse; so that no body could now hold a torch in the Ceramician combats. These contests, or rather these sports, established in honour of Prometheus, Vulcan, and Minerva, were renewed in these different feasts: these consisted in carrying a lighted torch, which was not to go out whilst he that had carried it ran to an assigned distance. The place for these sports was called *Ceramician* †. There were at Athens two places under this name, the one where they interred those who were slain in battle, and the other was a public square. Bacchus takes this occasion of joking upon a gross fat little fellow, who let his torch go out in one of these sports.

The Chorus, suspending their judgment in these disputes between these two poets, does not know to which of them to incline: the one attacking with so much vigour, the other defending himself with such address. They encourage the combatants with a comic air.

A C T V.

As if all that had gone before had been no other than a prelude, or in jest, the dispute is renewed with great heat and vivacity. Euripides, descending to particulars, attacks the prologues of Eschylus, who first recites the beginning of one of the four pieces he had published, according to custom, under the title of the Tetralogy of Orestes; it is the beginning of the *Coëphores* ‡, *Mercury conductor of the dead*, &c. In these verses, Euripides pretends,

* Verse 1106. Ita per Apollinem, inferiori remigi in os oppedere, &c.

† Κεραμικὴς.

‡ See the *Coephores*. Part. I Vol. L

to discover faults without number. These faults, real or pretended, are reduced to a quibble and a repetition; grammatical cavils which it is almost impossible satisfactorily to explain, in a modern language, like other faults with which they reproach each other. This is so trifling, and said in a manner so ridiculous, that it is sufficient to shew what the act consists of, without a farther examination of it.

In the fourth verse of the Coëphores, Orestes expresses himself thus: "I come hither to pour forth my complaints upon my father's tomb, that he may hear and understand." Euripides lays hold again of this new repetition of two Greek words, far less different in their signification than these *to understand and to bear*: upon which Bacchus says, with an air less comic than wanton, "Ha! don't you see that Orestes speaks to the dead, and consequently to the deaf, to whom it is right to repeat things three times at least?"

Euripides recites, in his turn, several verses from the beginnings of his prologues. Eschylus makes a wretched cavil at that of Oedipus †. "Oedipus, says Euripides, was at first most happy; but is since become the most unfortunate of men." Eschylus will have it, that a prince of whom the oracle had foretold so many horrible things could not be called happy, and was so far from becoming unhappy, that he was never otherwise. These minutenesses discover what we ought to think of the sport Aristophanes makes at the expence of two great poets. Bacchus jokes as usual, observing that Oedipus would have been happy, that is less unhappy ‡, if he had engaged with the unfortunate Erasinis. This last was one of the Athenian chiefs, who was accused as well as a Thrayfillus, a Pericles, an Aristocrates, and a Diomedon, the year in which was fought the battle of the Argonuses, which was the 26th of the war: this is an additional confirmation of the date of this comedy.

At length Eschylus, to shorten the dispute, undertakes to overset all the prologues of Euripides by a proverb, the application of which will always finish the verse which is begun: a joke which is hardly capable of being expressed; for what he proposes to join to the iambics as they begin in Euripides, is one of these three words of equal quantities which signify diminutively * *fine skins, little leaves,*

† A tragedy of Euripides, now lost.

‡ Or, rather if he was compared with

Erasinis.

* Καδύριον, θυλάκιον, λεπιδιον.

fine work wrought by the light of a lamp with much care and art. The meaning is to reproach Euripides for his having given too much attention to the finishing and filing and retouching, and consequently destroying, the vigor of his verses. Eschylus keeps his word. To every piece of a verse his adversary recites, he finds the means of attacking his proverb *οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρῶν* : as if he had said, *be has lost his time* †. This word sticks itself into each verse, so as not only to complete the line, but to give it a most ridiculous sense.

From the prologues they proceed to the Chorusses, or Interludes, which formed, as we have already observed, a considerable part of the ancient tragedy. But this so noble and so elevated at first, is become less interesting to us, notwithstanding, if I may use the expression, its Pindaric strains. Euripides recites a Chorus of Eschylus, and he again a Chorus of Euripides, always interrupted by the buffooneries of Bacchus, who cuts his jokes upon them both. In a word, the chorusses are not treated in a manner more serious than the prologues.

Eschylus now comes to the scales which were to weigh their verses. Bacchus says, that he is going to sell poetry by the pound. He then takes the scales, and commands that each of them should throw in a verse, or sentence. Euripides puts in the first verse of his *Medea* ‡, "Would to the Gods, the ship Argos had never *flown* upon the waters." Eschylus puts in one from his *Philoctetes* ||. "Thou river Spercheus, and ye sounding waters!" The scale preponderates immediately on the side of Eschylus; because, says Bacchus, this poet has put in a river; whereas the other has put in only a light word, as that of flying is. All that follows is of the same sort, and like turn: Eschylus always carries it, because he puts into the scale sometimes the word *death*, a weighty expression, against *eloquence*, which is lighter: sometimes chariots upon chariots, and heaps of dead upon the dead, against a weighty spear. At last Eschylus challenges Euripides to put into one scale himself, his books, his wife, his children, with his principal actor Cephisophon, and he would weigh him down with only two of his words in the other scale *.

† *Oleum perdidit*, a Latin proverb derived from the Greek.

‡ See the *Medea*. Vol. II.

|| One of those that are lost.

* It is to be observed that Bacchus cites a verse from Telephus, where Euripides, making the Grecian heroes play with dice,

says that Achilles had thrown four and two at one cast. This verse and the whole episode of the players were suppressed, and this piece because of the jokes that had been made upon it.

Eustathius, after one of the Ancients.

Bacchus dares not however speak. He would not incur the hatred of either of the two poets; and what is more, he declares that the one is full of spirit and fire, and that the other abounds with beauties. Pluto arrives, and presses Bacchus to determine. The God of wine declares, that he really must have a poet to save Athens, by public shews: a very satyric word against the Athenians, who are regarded here as children that must be amused, and who could not be satisfied with any thing but shews, when they ought to have thought of the safety of the republic threatened with intire ruin. He asks them which of the poets would give the best advice to the state, which was upon the verge of destruction: he puts questions to them, that he might discover what were their sentiments concerning Alcibiades, who had removed from Athens upon some discontent. Bacchus says that the people hated him, and yet could not do without him †.

“ Il le desire avoir devant les yeux

“ Et si lui est néanmoins odieux.

PLUTARCH, in Alcib.”

“ I hate, says Euripides speaking of the same person, a citizen
“ slow to serve his country, and ready to do it any injury, kind
“ to himself, unkind to the republic.” The thoughts of Eschylus upon the same subject are,

“ Le mieux seroit pour la chose publique

“ Ne nourrir point de lion tyrannique;

“ Mais puisqu'on veut le nourrir, nécessaire

“ Il est qu'on serve à ses façons de faire.

AMYOT, *ibid.*”

It seems as if these sentences were taken from some tragedies of Eschylus and Euripides now lost, which Aristophanes applies to the then condition of the great Alcibiades, hating and hated by the people. Bacchus finds the opinion of the one to be wise *, and of the other to be certain †. He engages the two poets to declare each his opinion
con-

† It is a thought of Martial, *Nec possum tecum vivere, nec sine te.*

* The difference in the Greek is only in one letter, σοφῆς, wisely; σφαῖς, certainly.

† They declare what was at that time the opinions concerning Alcibiades. Plutarch, in the place above cited, says, “ With

“ all his noble words and actions, the greatness of his courage, and vivacity of mind,
“ he had, on the other side, many faults
“ and imperfections; for, in his usual way
“ of living, he was too delicate, dissolute
“ in his amours with bad women, and disordered in his banquets, too expensive,
“ and

concerning the means of re-establishing the affairs of the republic. Euripides expresses himself with great severity against two individuals, and the little confidence the state should repose in those it employed. Eschylus, after having declared that he would not concern himself with evils that were incurable, and that Athens made no longer use of any citizens that were not wicked, he proposes, however, a maxim which might save them, which was, "To consider the enemy's country as their own, and their own as the enemy's; to look upon the sea as their best security, and the land as an asylum not much to be depended upon." Indeed the greatest power of the Athenians consisted in the enterprises they carried on against their enemies, and the strength of their navy. In this manner Pericles † spoke to induce them to undertake the Peloponnesian war.

Bacchus, being pressed to chuse one of the poets immediately, leaves the judgment of their merit to Pluto; but he declares at the same time that he shall chuse one who best pleases him, that is Eschylus. In vain Euripides appeals to his oaths †, and reproaches him for having insulted him after his death ‡. Bacchus clears himself, by quoting two of his verses so often criticised, *It is my tongue that swore, and not my heart*, and who knows, *if life is not death*? Pluto and the Chorus applaud him for his choice. Eschylus, before he takes his leave, in order to return to the upper world, resigns his place in that beneath to Sophocles, and particularly recommends it to them to keep Euripides at a proper distance.

Not to enter into a review of all the oddities of this piece, which I leave to the judgment of the reader, it is evident, from the faith-

" and effeminate in his dress; for he always
 " went cloath'd in long purple robes, which
 " trained after him as he walked across the
 " open place, with an excessive and a vain
 " expence. Following the same voluptu-
 " ous notions even when aboard the gal-
 " leys, he made them open and divide the
 " deck at the stern, that he might lay more
 " luxuriously; not having his bed stretched
 " upon hard boards, but suspended in the
 " air by girths. He carried to the wars a
 " gilded shield, without any ensign or de-
 " vise in use among the Athenians; but it
 " bore the image of Cupid, with thunder
 " in his hand: which when the men of
 " honour and estate in the city of Athens
 " saw, besides that they detested such prac-

" tices, and were incensed at them, they
 " dreaded his unrestrained boldness, and his
 " insolence in despising thus the laws and
 " customs of his country, as marking out
 " the man who aspired after tyranny, and
 " would throw every thing into the utmost
 " confusion: but Aristophanes well ex-
 " plains what affection the common people
 " had for him."

* Thucydides, I. 1.

† Euripides is supposed to have solicited Bacchus.

‡ Aristophanes says this in allusion to a law which forbid the ridiculing on the stage a person that was dead. But we see that this law was not strictly observed.

ful account given, that what relates to the three tragic poets, serves to illustrate rather than depreciate them. Indeed, Aristophanes appears here, as in other places, extremely prejudiced against Euripides: he neither spares him with respect to his manners, nor on account of his birth. As to his poetical talents, though he endeavours with much malignity to wound him, it is easily seen that he plays the wit rather than the critic. His Bacchus does not treat Eschylus, whom he chuses, with less severity than he does Euripides, whom he would humble. The most severe strokes are softened with some marks of esteem, which serve to shew how much Euripides was revered by the Athenians: but for all their esteem and veneration, what was there they did not laugh at? Generals, magistrates, governments, the Gods themselves. All is satyric here, and sure to be well received, if the comedy was merry, and seasoned well with Attic salt. The liberty Aristophanes has taken with regard to the publick is much more surprising than are his jokes upon the heroes of the Grecian stage: but the state and its leaders went on in their usual train, without concerning themselves with the satyr of Cratinus, of Eupolis, and of Aristophanes. It is also evident, that the glory of Euripides did not suffer much from the rage of his enemy, who attempted to blacken his morals and criticise his verse. The reader will give me leave to put him in mind of a reflection I have made in some places, which is, that what we now criticise in Euripides, especially in his *Alcestis*, was, at that time, likewise the place for criticism. We do not find that Aristophanes has always thought of this, notwithstanding his diligence in suffering nothing to escape that he could lay hold of. We must conclude then that what is disagreeable to us had not the same impression upon the Greeks; and that therefore justice demands of us not to impute these pretended faults to the poet, but to a change of manners, and to ideas very different from those in our times.

Another reflection that regards Eschylus is, that Bacchus, all wanton as he is in this piece, has very justly drawn the character of the father of tragedy, when he compares the gradation of his enthusiasm to presages, to the birth, the progress, and explosion of a tempest. Indeed, what Virgil says of the presages only, which proclaim it, perfectly represents what Eschylus must have felt in his first scenes, in order to have arrived gradually at his extreme emotion. 'Tis pity that one cannot express in prose, nor in French verse, the correspondence between the cadence of a verse and the subject it describes, which so often concur in a beautiful passage of Vir-

Virgil *; a cadence which is a more lively picture than even the expression itself. "The winds arise; the waters are agitated; the waves begin to swell; a horrid crash is heard from the lofty mountains; the shores resound afar off; the roaring of the waves that break one upon another, and the winds raging in the forests, add to the uproar and horror of the scene." Such is Eschylus in the beginning of his tragedies.

-
- * "Continuò ventis surgentibus, aut freta ponti
 "Incipiunt agitata tumescere, & aridus altis
 "Montibus audiri fragor, aut resonantia longè
 "Littora misceri, & nemorum increbrescere murmur."

Georg. l. i. v. 356.

THE
FEMALE ORATORS:
OR, THE
ASSEMBLY of WOMEN.

A
COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Represented in the 14th year of the 96th olympiad, under the Archon Demostratus, or about that time. The proofs of this date are only conjectural.

ANTIQUITY cannot shew us a more violent satire against women, and against the government of Athens, than this comedy *. Euripides, who was the declared enemy of the sex, never wrote any thing half so severe: therefore, if we consider the nature of the ancient comedy, and the extreme licentiousness of the poet, we cannot but conclude that this piece must be spoken of with great reserve. Although decency will not permit me to say much of it, yet it does not hinder me from satisfying the curiosity of my readers upon what relates to the government of Athens, and the famous war of Peloponnesus; but it is not necessary to enter into the division of the acts, since only the substance of a few scenes is fit to be produced. The style of this piece is more elevated and energetick than in any other of the comedies of Aristophanes, who seems to have designedly given it a tragic cast,

* Without excepting even *Lyssistrata*, a comedy in the same taste.

doubtless to ridicule the style of Euripides, particularly in his *Menælippe*, a tragedy which is not come down to us; in which he introduces a philosophic woman. Others say, that Aristophanes has in this comedy endeavoured to imitate the manner of Agathon, an effeminate tragic poet, or that of Diciogeneus; but however this may be, I do not think Plutarch's objections to this comedy are well grounded. The poet has not, as that writer alledges, made his women depart from their character, by assuming that of governors of the state, since it is in this fiction that all the poignancy of the satire consists. Women who are supposed to be metamorphosed into ministers of state ought to support well the part they act. It was thus I answered his objection to the abject manners given to Demosthenes and Nicias, who, in the comedy of the Knights, are represented as slaves. After all, it must be acknowledged that the women but too faithfully preserve their character; a character exaggerated indeed, since libertinism constitutes the predominant strokes; but extremely proper for the astonishing licentiousness which the ancient comedy allowed itself in.

Nothing can be more simple than the subject. Praxagora, the wife of one of the principal magistrates, had entered into a conspiracy with the greatest part of the Athenian women, to deceive the people, and prevail upon them to put the government of Athens, which the men seemed unequal to, into the hands of women. She succeeds in this design by a stratagem, and proposes the most absurd laws, the ridicule of which falls, by a counter-stroke, upon the present government of Athens.

Praxagora opens the scene before the break of day; and, like Socia in *Amphitruon*, talks to her lanthorn in the public square. This light being placed on high, serves as a signal for the assembly of women. But we will pass over what she says to her lanthorn, which she calls the accomplice of the crimes committed by her sex.

At length she grows impatient at the long delay of her companions. What can have happened to them? have they not been able to deceive the vigilance of their husbands, and to come out in the night disguised according to their agreement? The place where the scene lies is marked; it is a square called *Sciron*, in one of the suburbs of Athens. Praxagora, perceiving a light coming towards her, moves cautiously to discover who is approaching, and meets one of her companions. She applauds her for her diligence. Another woman puts her head out of the window; at last they all arrive,

one after another; and the poet takes care to describe either them or their husbands by strokes extremely bold and severe. The women being thus assembled, shew to each other the disguises they intend to wear over their habits; namely, their husbands clokes, and their shoes and stockings. They hold in their hands false beards, some of which they say are more beautiful than the beard of Epocrates*, all ready to put on when it is necessary for them to appear.

Praxagora, perceiving that the time when the people are summoned to the assembly draws near, begins, like their general, to give them her orders; and first she directs them all to take their seats; she next commands them to disguise their air, motions, and voices, so artfully that they may deceive the people, and pass upon them for their magistrates. Then she examines whether they are perfect in their lesson. One of the women brings her work along with her, to amuse her. Strange mistake! is it now a time to think of female employments? Another is perplexed how she shall harangue the people; for, says she, we have never studied rhetoric. Praxagora assures her, that as soon as they have all put on their false beards, they will become fine speakers: "And now, adds she, which of you will speak?"

A woman presents herself, as in the *Feasts of Ceres*, and puts a crown on her head, as was usual for orators to do; but the first words this female orator speaks is to ask for wine. This is said in allusion to the crowns which were generally worn at entertainments; and still more to shew how much women and orators were addicted to the vice of drunkenness, which Demosthenes, in particular, was charged with. Praxagora, before her companion had begun to speak, turned towards the pit and said, "*Peace there, be silent Aripbrades*: a severe stroke; for this Aripbrades was effeminate, and a great babbler. But to return to the female orator, who having been reproved for asking for wine, replies, "How! do not men drink when they are sitting in council? Most certainly they do, and their decrees smell strongly of wine. Are you ignorant, that it is not for libations only that they call for liquor? Alas! they think more of themselves than the Gods. From whence think you proceeds that abuse they throw upon one another? and why are they often carried home to their houses?" In this manner does Aristophanes speak of the drunkenness of the Athenians.

* An orator who was often rallied on account of his beard.

Another woman crowns her head, and leaning upon her stick, in imitation of some celebrated orator, "I could have wished, says she, that some one more eloquent than myself had spoke, and given me an opportunity of being a quiet auditor; but I cannot bear to think that the mysterious ditches should be troughs filled with water *, as is done in the inns. No, by Ceres and Proserpine†, it is not to be endured."

P R A X A G O R A.

By Ceres and Proserpine! What an oath! art thou mad?

F E M A L E O R A T O R.

Mad! Why I have not asked again for wine.

P R A X A G O R A.

No, by Jupiter! but though thou hast assumed the character of a man, thou swearest like a woman.

Praxagora begins now to study her speech; but the woman who had first spoke, resuming the crown, goes on in this manner: "I have been considering what to say; let us see if I can speak better now. Oh, women who are here assembled! (she falls into a mistake, and says women instead of men, but apologizes for it by a severe stroke levelled at the cowardly Epigonus, who is supposed to have been in the pit) I looked on that side, says she, and that occasioned my mistake."

P R A X A G O R A.

Sit down, I perceive that I must speak for you all. I take the crown therefore, and may the Gods inspire me (she coughs.) Gentlemen, I take an equal interest with you in every thing that regards the state: but I cannot help acknowledging that I am excessively grieved to see it governed so ill; and that our affairs are managed with so little prudence. I see plainly, that the commonwealth consults only such counsellors as succeed to each other's wickedness as well as employments. If it should happen that one of them continues honest for a year, he assumes the privilege of being a rogue for ten years afterwards. Would you confide the government into

* In allusion to a superstitious custom of pouring wine or oil into trenches made on purpose in the ground

† *μὰ τὸ Διὸς*. Some have translated it by

Castor and Pollux, for want of reflecting that the Athenian women swore by Ceres and Proserpine.

other hands, things would grow worse. Men are of a disposition too harsh and inflexible to be capable of improving. Ah, gentlemen, you are afraid of those who wish you well, and fawn upon those who hate you! Whenever we shall cease to hold assemblies, we shall look upon Agyrius* as a wicked man: at present when councils are in fashion, we think very differently of him. He who receives money for attending them, declares they are of the utmost importance; and he who receives none asserts those persons who sell their advice to be worthy of death.

Praxagora is interrupted here by ludicrous exclamations. She then proceeds, and mentions a confederacy which by all circumstances seems to be the league which the Athenians, the Beotians, the Argives, and the Corinthians, had entered into against Lacedemon, whose growing power ever since her elevation and the decay of that of the Athenians, by the Peloponnesian war, had begun to give them umbrage, and was the cause of the *Corinthian* war. This treaty, according to Diodorus, B. 14. was concluded the second year of the 96th olympiad, under the archon Diophantus: the celebrated Conon † took great pains to bring it to perfection. It was he who found means to draw money from the Persians, which was of great use to him in bringing over many of the allies from the party of Lacedemon; and in confirming the union of Athens and Corinth, in which he succeeded. But the following year ‡, after he had caused the fortifications of Athens to be repaired, he withdrew, and was imprisoned at Sardis§, by Tiribazus, and never afterwards recovered his liberty. The Athenians were not successful in this war. It is by this fact in history, and by the flight of Conon, which is plainly enough hinted at in this passage of the comedy, and confirmed by a scholiast who names Conon, that we are able to fix with some probability the date of this piece, to the fourth year of the 96th olympiad, unless we would still place it further back. But let us hear what Praxagora says upon this subject.

* This Agyrius is again mentioned in Plutus, which makes it probable that this comedy and that of Plutus were represented within a little time after one another.

† For the more perfectly understanding this, read the abridgment of the life of Conon by Cornelius Nepos, at the end of this comedy.

‡ In the third year of the 96th olympiad, under the Archon Eubulides.

§ Sardis, a city of Lydia near mount Timolus, upon the Pactolus. It was under the dominion of the Persians. Cyrus had taken it; and by that means subjected all Lydia to his empire, with Cræsus, the king of that country.

"When a confederate league was under deliberation, then it was publickly said, that unless this was effected, all would be lost. This league was concluded, and those who had advised that measure were the first to blame it *. Even the orator (Conon) who was the author of it fled, and never appeared more. The poor thought it necessary that we should send out a fleet; but the rich and the labourers did not approve of it. O Athenians! you are angry with the Corinthians †, and yet they, alas! are very useful to you; be you so to them likewise. Argeus is an ignorant fool, and Jerom is wise and prudent."

Conon had left the command of the fleet to this Jerom, in conjunction with Nicophemus, when he went into Persia to confer with king Artaxerxes: a certain proof that Aristophanes touched that point of history which we have mentioned; but all the explanations we can collect will not throw so much light as we could wish upon this political oration of Praxagora.

"Security, continues she, seems willing to return to the republic: but Thrasylbulus has taken care to drive her hence, by interposing his advice in this affair when it was not required." This Thrasylbulus was a busy turbulent man, says the scholiast, extremely haughty, who had been corrupted by bribes, and an enemy to the people. He must certainly then be the same Thrasylbulus, who, as Plutarch says, rendered Alcybiades odious to the citizens, after the unfortunate expedition against Ephesus, and not the Thrasylbulus who delivered his country from the thirty tyrants, which the Lacedemonian conquerors, after the Peloponnesian war, placed at the head of the republic of Athens.

Praxagora concludes in this manner: "Poor people! you are the cause of all these calamities; you who require to be paid for your votes out of the public treasure; and who are extremely attentive to what you are to gain at the assemblies, and never reflect that public affairs go on as poorly as the halting Æsimus: however, if you will take my council, all may be remedied. I declare myself able to save the state. How, by what means, you will ask me? Thus then, put the government into the hands of the women. Why should this seem strange? do we not confide to them the government of our families? ‡."

* Probably because the first expedition was unsuccessful.

† Because they did not agree among themselves, nor with their allies. Diod. B. 14.

‡ In the comedy called *Lyssistrata*, where the subject greatly resembles this, there is the same kind of reasoning on a like occasion.

ONE OF THE WOMEN.

Finely said. Courage, Praxagora, nothing can be finer: proceed.

P R A X A G O R A.

I can convince you that women are much fitter for government than us men: for first they wash linen in warm water, after the ancient manner*; and they are likewise much addicted to plots and intrigues. If the state would follow their example, and be less fond of making innovations, it would be secure from all danger.

The women dress meat as formerly: they celebrate the feasts of Ceres and Proserpine as formerly: they abuse their husbands as formerly: they cheat as formerly: they drink as formerly: in a word, they do every thing as they did formerly. If then, Athenians, we should trust them with the government of the state, we must not entertain suspicions of them, or be uneasy about their conduct: we may be assured that they will never alter from the ancient method. They will not be lavish of the citizens blood; they are their mothers. Ah! by what more tender title can they be induced to love the people? Besides, they are excellent at amassing money. They are born with a principle of frugality: do not imagine that they can ever be imposed upon. They are too perfect in the art of deceiving others ever to be duped themselves. I shall pass over in silence all the other great qualities which the sex have for government. Follow my counsels, and you will find the benefit of them.

Such is Praxagora's oration, which she pronounces first to her companions. It is a singular piece, and I thought it necessary to give it the reader entire.

They ask her where she has learned this eloquence. "Oh, replies she, I lodged in the place where the assembly of the people was held at the time when all the inhabitants of Attica † crowded to Athens, in the beginning of the Peloponnesian war; and there I had an opportunity of hearing our orators declaim." The wo-

* This, says Suidas, signifies that they do not depart from the ancient manners. Probably this passage might be found to have another sense, if we compare it with one of the same kind in the comedy entitled *Lysistrata*, where it is said that the state ought to be purged of rogues, as the dirt is washed out of linen.

† It must be remembered, that at the beginning of hostilities in the Peloponnesian war, the city of Athens was filled with the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns, who took up their lodgings as well as they could in the soldiers barracks, in the midst of the public squares.

men immediately name her for their chief : but they ask her some questions ; as for example, what she will do if Ciphalus should oppose her opinion ?

P R A X A G O R A.

I will say that he has lost his senses.

ONE OF THE WOMEN.

That is well known.

P R A X A G O R A.

That he is quite mad, and ought to be chained.

A N O T H E R W O M A N.

Who doubts it ?

P R A X A G O R A, *with an ironical air.*

Who, it must be acknowledged, does not understand his trade of a potter very well, but is extremely capable of governing the state.

F I R S T W O M A N.

Very good ; but if the blear-eyed Neoclides * should abuse you, &c.

Praxagora thus piqued, continues to answer such objections by severe raileries upon those citizens who were most noted, and in publick employments. She afterwards ridicules the orators, by exhorting her companions to imitate them, to raise with great gravity the sleeve of their robe, and shew the arm bare as high as the shoulder, &c. She now commands them to put on their disguise ; first the Laconian shoes ; secondly the false beards ; thirdly, the cloke above their own garment ; fourthly, the stick to lean upon. Being completely metamorphosed, she prepares to go, crying, " Let us make haste ; for there is no money given to those who come late to the assembly." We have already taken notice of the custom of giving three oboles a man, on each day the assembly was held ; and we find that Aristophanes never fails to ridicule it upon all occasions, as a meanness unworthy of individuals, and ruinous to the whole state.

The Chorus of women continue the raillery, by the eagerness they express to be early at the assembly, in imitation of the magi-

* Neoclides, an Athenian, charged with having embezzled the publick treasure : he was a great friend to prosecutions.

strates and the people. "In the time of the archon Myronides, (say the Chorus) every one used to carry with him some bread, three or four olives, and something to quench his thirst; but it is quite otherwise now. Each man goes thither to receive three oboles, like a labourer who carries the mortar: and for what are these three oboles given? why, for the labour of serving his country."

There can be no doubt that the first act ends here. The poet has shewn great art in thus giving us an idea of what was to pass in the assembly, by the women's exercising themselves in the parts they were to act; for it was not possible to represent the assembly of the people upon the stage: it is to be supposed that it was held in this interval between the acts.

Blepyrus, the husband of Praxagora, comes out in great astonishment at the absence of his wife: having searched in vain for his own cloaths, he was obliged to put on her robe, in which he makes a very ludicrous appearance. He reasons with himself concerning the meaning of this accident. Here follows a very low scene which it is not fit to mention; and which marks the free and unpolished manners of the citizens of Athens: manners which have a great resemblance to those of a certain republic in Europe. Blepyrus, with all his fooleries, is however supposed to be one of the principal magistrates of the state. Another citizen, whom the flight of his wife had thrown into equal consternation, comes to confer with his friend concerning this strange event; and, in a few minutes afterwards, they are joined by a third, named Chremes, who acquaints them that he was just returned from the assembly, and for the first time in his life came away without receiving the three oboles, as usual; that he found all the places taken up before the break of day, by the vulgar: that they were taking into consideration the means of preserving the republic, now fallen to decay: that Neoclides, with his burnt-eye-lids*, rose up to make a speech, but was silenced with loud hisses: that afterwards, one Eveon, who had occasion for a cloke, proposed a very singular scheme, which was, to oblige every tradesman to furnish the citizens *gratis*, with all sorts of necessaries†: that after him, a young man, finely

* A few lines above he is called *blear-eyed*. It is an allusion to some accident which had happened to this orator.

† The poet here alludes probably to those who run in debt with tradesmen.

shaped, (he means Praxagora,) and as beautiful as Nicias * had proved that the best thing they could do was to put the government into the hands of the women: that all the shoemakers applauded him; but that the husbandmen disapproved of the motion. "They shewed themselves to be sensible persons, says Blepyrus." "The greater number, pursues Chremes, were for the decree in favour of the women, to whom great praises were given, but many censures were cast on you."

BLEPYRUS.

What censures were cast on me?

CHREMES.

First the orator † said, that you were a very pliant personage, and very cunning.

BLEPYRUS.

And what did he say of you?

CHREMES.

Stay: hear first what regards yourself. He said you were a cheat.

BLEPYRUS.

What am I the only one then?

CHREMES.

An informer.

BLEPYRUS.

Did he say this of me alone?

CHREMES.

Oh no, he said the same of all this honourable company. ‡ *Pointing to the pit.*

* Perhaps he means the grandson of Nicias, the famous orator and general, who died with Demosthenes in the expedition against Sicily: he had a son named Niceratus, who was murdered by the command of the thirty tyrants. Nicias, the son of this Niceratus, was about fifteen or sixteen years old when this comedy was acted.

† Praxagora, the wife of Blepyrus. Chremes says that she spoke thus of her husband, or of the magistrates in general. There is a good deal of true humour in this passage.

‡ Horace says of Lucilius the satyrist

"Primores populi arripuit populumque
"tributum."

BLE-

BLEPYRUS.

Pray, who is this orator who spoke so finely?

CHREMES.

Have patience. He said that women had more wisdom than men: that they better understand how to amass money, and are more capable of secrecy; for he added that they were never known to divulge the mysteries of Ceres and Proserpine, whereas you and I make public all that passes in our consultations.

BLEPYRUS.

By Mercury, he spoke truly.

CHREMES.

He said that women lend each other their cloaths, their gold, and jewels, without having witnesses present; which however the borrowers take no advantage of, but faithfully return them again: a thing which we never do.

BLEPYRUS.

No faith, although we should have received them before witnesses:

CHREMES.

Nay more, he said that women never give in informations: that they are never guilty of mean frauds: that they never pillage the people. In short, he said a thousand fine things of the sex.

BLEPYRUS.

And what resolution was taken in the assembly.

CHREMES.

That you should yield to the women the administration of affairs; and the rather as this is the only innovation which has not been yet thought of in Athens.

But neither he, nor any comic poet, ever carried this liberty of censure so far as Aristophanes; even his contemporaries, (if we take his word for it) durst not venture to be so severe. It must be acknowledged, however, that the French scenes in the Italian Theatre of Cherardi, have a great deal of that spirit of boldness and freedom; but

with this difference, that Aristophanes attacks offices and persons, whereas the Italian drama strikes at offices only. If the reader will compare the scene *contre les hommes dans les souhaits*, with this of Aristophanes, it will be found to have a near resemblance to it, and to a great part of this comedy.

BLEPYRUS.

And will this decree pass?

CHREMES.

Most certainly.

BLEPYRUS.

And are the women to be invested with all the employments which men used to have?

CHREMES.

Yes.

BLEPYRUS.

So it is no longer me, but my wife, that must go to the courts of justice?

CHREMES.

Nor are you any longer to have the charge of your children's education: this also will belong to your wife.

BLEPYRUS.

Then I shall no longer be impatient for the approach of day.

CHREMES.

No, by Jupiter! the women will henceforward do all the business, and you may sit at home with your arms across.

Blepyrus, and Chremes, full of astonishment at this strange decree, take leave of each other, saying, "Our fathers have often said, that our most ridiculous decrees were by the singular goodness of the Gods turned to our benefit*. Would to heaven that this may be the case now.

When they go off the stage the Chorus of women enter, as returning from the assembly: they look round them cautiously, to be sure that no man is near, that they may talk to each other freely, and enjoy their victory. They then stop before Praxagora's house, the greater part of them having quitted their beards, and the rest of their disguise. Praxagora joins them, and intreats those who are still disguised to resume their own habits as soon as possible: she prepares to go into her house, to put her husband's cloak in its place,

* Demosthenes had said the same in his oration. See also the Clouds,

and desires her companions to wait till she returns, that she may consult them upon the measures necessary to be taken for the good government of the state, with which she had been intrusted in the quality of Archon.

Blepyrus, who was standing concealed near his door, in the corner of the stage, perceiving his wife approach, stops her, and asks her from whence she comes with that cloak? Praxagora assumes a haughty air, and begins first to be angry, lest she should be suspected of any intrigue. She says, that one of her friends being taken in labour in the night, had sent for her; and she colours over this pretence and her disguise in the best manner she is able, and continues her spirited tone, which makes a scene truly comic. Blepyrus mentions the new decree; and Praxagora, feigning astonishment and curiosity, obliges her husband to give her an account of the whole affair. After having heard it all, "The republic is going to be very happy, said she."

BLEPYRUS.

How?

PRAXAGORA.

On many accounts. Men, audacious men, will no more dishonour her by the most scandalous actions: there will be no more false evidence, no more informations, no more ---

BLEPYRUS.

Not so fast, pray. Would you have me starve then?

A CITIZEN *who was with Blepyrus.*

Let her proceed, I intreat you.

PRAXAGORA.

No more of those rogues who cheat with impunity: no more wretches who envy their neighbours riches. We shall have no more poverty, no more wretchedness, no more bribes.

THE CITIZEN.

Fine promises these, if they can be made good.

PRAXAGORA.

I will answer for it they can; you shall be witness, and I defy my husband to make any reasonable objection to what I am going to propose.

The

The Chorus, perceiving the dispute is now begun, exhort Praxagora to support courageously the cause of her sex; to explain her system of government clearly, and to execute a prodigy, till then unheard of in Athens: "For our citizens, say they, are weary of seeing things go on in a regular and usual train; they would have novelties. Here then is one for them: come proceed quickly to the matter. Speak, and execute."

The plan and execution of this extraordinary system makes the soul of this piece from the beginning to the end of it. Praxagora is afraid that the spectators will not relish such strange novelties; but Blepyrus himself endeavours to remove this doubt, as the Chorus had done before; and by the same satyrical stroke against the extravagant fondness of the Athenians for whatever was new. Aristophanes seems to have been afraid that he would not be understood when he railed so freely against the government; for, in the piece before us, he several times repeats, that the Athenians were mad after novelties; and that politicks, as well as all things else, were subject to the vicissitudes of fashion.

Praxagora, accordingly, explains her scheme, which is, that there shall be a general community of goods; that each citizen shall be obliged to put his treasure into the hands of the women, who are to distribute it equally, and with economy. If any one conceals his money, he will contract the guilt of perjury.

"Very fine! says Blepyrus; and perhaps that man has accumulated those riches* by taking false oaths. Of what use will his perjuring himself be to him, replies the wife, when he will have no longer any cause to fear poverty, which is alone the mother of crimes? Before the new decree took place, perjury was profitable; but by this happy invention, no one will be attentive to increase his own particular fortune, since he will have all his necessities supplied out of the public fund."

BLEPYRUS.

But I would fain know how, according to your system, the Athenians are to procure cloaths.

PRAXAGORA.

Nothing is more easy. They shall wear those they have, till the wives can make others for their husbands.

* A thing very usual in the time of Aristophanes, if we will take his word for it.

BLEPYRUS.

Pray answer me one question more. If a citizen should be condemned by the court to pay a fine, from whence must the sum be supplied, for it is not reasonable that this money should be paid out of the publick treasure?

PRAXAGORA.

A pretty difficulty this! Why there will be no more law-suits.

BLEPYRUS.

That will be death to many Athenians.

Praxagora, by the same method of reasoning, proves that there will be no more robbers, no more cheats, no more musicians. And as for personal quarrels, she says, which formerly produced litigations, it will be easy to remedy them by the law of retaliation. The city and all the houses are to be in common, as if Attica was but one family. She has the following ridiculous regulation for their principal meals. The court of justice and the porticos are to be converted into eating-houses, and the tribunals into buffets. They are to have no other subject for their songs at table, but the glorious exploits of those who have behaved valiantly in battle; and cowards, who doubtless, after having turned their backs to the enemy, will not dare to appear at table, are to be branded with infamy. These places are to be regulated by lot. A herald is to draw the letters of the alphabet, and each citizen is to take his place as the letter fallen to him directs; as for example *, if he has the letter B. he is to eat at the portico called *Basilique*. The tables are to be supplied plentifully, and with delicacy, so that there may be no disputes occasioned by a fear of not having a good repast.

Blepyrus diverts himself extremely with this whimsical scheme; but Praxagora, who had formed it in earnest, retires to put it in execution. Her intention is to make a woman, whose voice is remarkably strong, proclaim the decree for each citizen to bring his money to the publick stock; and afterwards she is to prepare the repast for the present day. Blepyrus thinks all this so pleasant, that

* Praxagora proceeds to name several the custom of chusing by means of these letters and several places as tribunals of letters the judges in civil causes, which these letters are initials, to ridicule

“ he

he resolves to follow his wife, "That those, says he, who pass
"by may say, there is the husband of the lady governess."

In the following act (as it is supposed the decree for a community of goods has been published) * two citizens appear, one of whom is willing to obey the decree, and the other resolute against it. The former humourously apostrophises his furniture, which he causes to be brought piece by piece out of his house. "Come out, oh kettle, says he, thou art so black already, that thou canst not be made worse by boiling the drugs with which Lyfocrata dies her white hairs." "By my faith, cries the other citizen, I will not be such a fool as to deliver up thus all the fruits of my labour and frugality. I will first see what success this fine decree meets with." He speaks these words as he comes out of his house, and meeting his neighbour, with his goods at the door, he asks him if he is going to put them in pawn? Being answered that he is preparing to obey the new law, he calls him a madman, and declares, that he is determined to wait till he knows what the people will do; and that he will be the last in committing such folly; "For I am well persuaded, says he, that those who have promised to obey the law mean nothing less." He for his part will follow his own maxim, which he humourously repeats several times over; namely, That he will continue to delay and to procrastinate. There is in this scene a good deal of Attic salt. "I know the disposition of our Athenians, says this cautious citizen: they are very ready to make decrees, but very slow in executing them."

There is a stroke also at the avaritious Antisthenes, and the prodigal Callias, the son of Hipponicus, who, as † Elian tells us, having squandered all his estate with a Pericles and a Nicias (not the two famous heroes so called) agreed together to poison themselves, having nothing more to do in the world.

The distrustful citizen, continuing to exhort his neighbour not to part with his effects, in obedience to an uncertain decree, says that every day decrees as trifling and ridiculous are published; as that for instance which settled the price of salt at a very small sum, and immediately was abrogated. He quotes another concerning leather money, which was published under the archon Callias, and which being afterwards cried down, was the cause that many citizens were ruined; and lastly, he mentions a third upon a tax which

* This is done after Praxagora is gone off the stage.

† Elien Var Hist. l. 4. c. 23.

did not succeed. The first citizen, whom these arguments cannot prevail upon, refutes them no otherwise than by saying, "What you alledge might formerly be convincing, when men governed the state, but now it is the women who make laws." A severe stroke this against those three decrees, and indeed against all the others.

A woman now enters, who, performing the office of a herald, proclaims that the public dinner is ready; and that the citizens have nothing to do but to draw their tickets, that they may repair to the several places marked therein, where they are to eat. The citizen who refused to deliver up his effects to the public stock is however very willing to partake of the public feast; but the female herald pays him back all the ridicule he had before thrown on his neighbour: a sort of humour frequently found in Aristophanes, and in the true taste of comedy. I shall say nothing more of this piece; the reader may be assured that all the rest is very indifferent*.

* There is however a very curious passage at the end. The Chorus exhort each other to go on dancing to the feast that is prepared for them, and express the different dishes they are to be regaled with, by a

compounded word, which comprehends six verses, in 76 syllables, as Rapin has judiciously observed in his observations upon poetry. See the discourse upon comedy.

A N
A B R I D G M E N T
OF THE
L I F E of C O N O N.

FROM THE

The Lives of Great Commanders, by CORNELIUS NEPOS,
translated by M. L'GRAS, of the Oratory. Paris, 1729.

CONON*, the Athenian, was called to the government of the common-wealth, during the Peloponnesian war, in which he commanded the forces both by land and sea, and acquitted himself so worthily of those employments, that the Athenians, who thought they were obliged in gratitude to reward his services with the highest honours, conferred upon him the government of all the islands: his first conquest was, that of Pheræ, a colony of the Lacedemonians †.

He was pretor at the latter end of the Peloponnesian war, when the power of Athens was so entirely sunk by the victory Lysander gained at the river Ægos. Conon ‡ was not present at this battle, and from that time fortune ceased to be favourable to the Athenians: but as this great man joined to his long experience in war, the most consummate skill as a general, it was not doubted but that if he had commanded in that action, the Athenians would not have been defeated.

Conon, being at Cyprus when he was informed of the melancholy condition of his country, and that Athens was falling under the yoke of the Lacedemonians, withdrew to the court of Pharnabazus, satrap of Lydia and Ionia, and the kinsman and son-in-law of the king of Persia. He did not make choice of this retreat because

* He was the son of Timotheus.

† In Achaia.

‡ This passage seems to contradict both Xenophon and Plutarch, who say, that

Conon fled after the battle with eight gallees, and took refuge at Cyprus, at the court of king Evagoras.

he

he might live there inactive and secure, but that he might assist his distressed countrymen; and for that purpose he used his utmost endeavours to conciliate the friendship of the satrap; and even exposed himself to the greatest dangers to gain his confidence. In this design he succeeded so happily, that when the Lacedemonians, after their conquest of Athens, broke through their treaties with Artaxerxes *, and sent Agesilaus into Asia to make war, being privately incited thereto by Tisaphernes, who had a particular interest in this rupture; Conon commanded the Persian army, and nothing was done in this war but what was conformable to the designs and orders of the Athenian general. He every where made head against Agesilaus, who was a great general; but Conon, by the prudence of his counsels, often obstructed his best concerted designs; and it is certain that it was chiefly owing to him that the Spartan king did not carry his conquests in Asia as far as Mount Taurus. Agesilaus being recalled by the Lacedemonians, on account of the war which the Athenians and the † Eeotians had just declared against them; Conon lost no part of his favour with the Persian generals, and was of great use to them in all their enterprises. No one any longer doubted of the treachery of Tisaphernes, but Artaxerxes; and the great services he had received from this satrap, formerly, seemed to secure to him that favour, which, by his perfidy, he was no longer worthy of: nor is it surprising that the king of Persia should be slow to entertain suspicions against a man by whose skill and conduct he had conquered his brother Cyrus: but Pharnabazus sent Conon to him with proofs of the satrap's treason.

When Conon arrived at the Persian court, he addressed himself to a great officer of the palace ‡, named Tithraustes, and telling him that he had affairs of consequence to communicate to the king, desired he would procure him an audience. "I am very ready to grant your request, replied Tithraustes; but consider first whether it will not be better for you to transact this affair by writing; for if you are desirous of being introduced to the king, you must resolve to worship him after the manner of the Persians. If you feel in yourself any reluctance to comply with this custom, trust your business to my management, and rely upon my diligence and

* It would seem that by the alliance here mentioned, we must understand, that which the Lacedemonians concluded with the second Darius, the father of this Artaxerxes, surnamed Mnemon and Cyrus.

† Here begins the passage which relates to the comedy of the *Female Orators*.

‡ In the text it is *Chiliarchus*, commander of a thousand men.

“fidelity for your service.” “I am not unwilling, answered Conon, “to pay your master that respect which is due to his dignity; but being born in a republic, accustomed to rule other nations, I should “be apprehensive of injuring my country were I to renounce her “customs, to comply with those of foreigners.” Being determined not to give up this point, he delivered the sum of what he had to say in writing; and the king gave so much credit to his depositions, that he instantly declared Tisaphernes an enemy to his person and state, consented to enter into a war with the Lacedemonians, and desired Conon to make choice of whom he thought proper to act as treasurer to the troops to be employed in this war; but this Conon declined, and advised the king to trust the choice to Pharnabazus, who better knew the capacity and integrity of his subjects, than he who was a stranger could be supposed to do. Conon, after having received several very considerable presents from Artaxerxes, went by his order, into Cyprus and Phœnicia, and to other countries on the sea-coast, to provide ships of war and form a fleet capable of acting the ensuing summer. Pharnabazus was, according to his desire, appointed his colleague in this expedition.

As soon as the Lacedemonians heard of the preparations making against them, they bent all their thoughts upon a vigorous defence, not so much through a fear of the barbarians, as because they, in the person of Conon, opposed to them a valiant and prudent general, whose enterprizes were supported with all the wealth of the king of Persia. They immediately equipped a fleet, the command of which was given to Pisander; but Conon attacked it near Cnidas*, and after a bloody fight, routed it entirely, took a great number of ships, and sunk many more. By this victory he not only restored liberty to Athens, but also freed all Greece from the unjust power of the Lacedemonians. Conon returned afterwards to Athens with some of the ships which he had taken from the enemy. He rebuilt the walls of the city, and the port which Lysander had demolished; and distributed among his fellow citizens five hundred talents which he had received from Pharnabazus.

Conon, by a fault common to almost all men, could not enjoy the favours of fortune with that equanimity with which he had

* A city of Caria, in which was a famous temple dedicated to Venus. Cnidas was, according to Herodotus, a Lacedemonian colony. The Cnidians, says he, had an

inclination to cut through their isthmus; but were dissuaded from this enterprise by an oracle.

supported her frowns; for having triumphed over the Lacedemonians both by land and sea, he thought he had sufficiently revenged the injuries his country had suffered, and he now formed enterprizes which exceeded his power to perform. However, these enterprizes being undertaken, not to increase the power of the Persians, but to restore the commonwealth of Athens to its former splendor, his schemes were not disapproved, but even did honour to his probity and virtue. Depending therefore upon the great authority he had acquired since the famous victory at Cnidas, as well among the barbarians as the Greeks, he endeavoured privately to subject Ionia and Eolia again to the dominion of Athens; but this design not being carefully concealed, it came to the knowledge of Tiribazus*, governor of Sardes, who sent for Conon under pretence of charging him with some commission to the king of Persia. Conon, having no suspicion of the satrap's ill intentions towards him, went to his court, and was imprisoned immediately upon his arrival. He continued in confinement some time. It is said by several authors, that he was carried to the king, who put him to death; but Dion, the historian, upon whose authority I have related several things concerning the affairs of Persia, says, that he found means to make his escape, but whether by the consent, or by the negligence of Tiribazus he is doubtful.

* He commanded the land forces.

PLU.

PLUTUS.

A

COMEDY by ARISTOPHANES.

Acted in the fourth year of the ninety-seventh olympiad, under the Archon Antipater.

WE have no other proof of the exactness of this date, but what the Greek preface furnishes us with; for Aristophanes, contrary to his usual custom, speaks very little in his *Plutus* of public affairs, and the government of the state. At most, we can draw but some slight hints from it, which confirm the date fixed by the ancient scholiast. This reserve in the poet is alone sufficient to shew how much of its Cynical licentiousness the old comedy was beginning to lose. It followed the fate of democracy, which after frequent changes and frequent restorations, scarce preserved any of its former vigour, and was no more than the shadow of the ancient popular government, which prevailed forty years before, when Aristophanes exhibited his comedy called the *Daitalians*, under the archon Diotimus.

We are told by one of the scholiasts, that *Plutus* was twice represented; and that there was an interval of twenty years between its first representation, and that we are speaking of here: but there is nothing in the comedy which gives us any room to believe so. The Greek preface (which, from its being so extremely circumstantial,) appears to be very ancient, says not a word concerning these two several exhibitions; and indeed it is not necessary to enter into a discussion of this matter, since it would afford us little information. We will therefore confine ourselves to the examination of the piece itself, and judge of its new character, without taking any pains to discover whether the *Plutus* which is come down to us is a second comedy

comedy under that title, or the first retouched. We shall find a Chorus in it; but a very different one from all we have hitherto seen of this poet. There is neither slander nor invective in this Chorus; particular Athenians are indeed named, and rallied personally, but with less indecency than in any of his others. It is from the fiction chiefly, and not from its satire, that this comedy pleases; and its satire, will be found to have scarce any of that acrimony which abound in all the other comedies of this poet.

Aristophanes feigns that a yeoman, or farmer, having met a blind man, discovers him to be the God of Riches, restores him to his sight, and places him in the shrine of Jupiter. The avarice of the Athenians, which they carried even to impiety, several individuals, and the Gods, form the subject of those railleries, which the fiction naturally supplies; and which abound in every scene. The characters are Plutus, Chremylus, a farmer, or yeoman; Cario, his servant; the wife of Chremylus; Blepsidemus, another farmer; Poverty; an honest citizen; a wicked citizen; an informer; an old woman; a young spendthrift; Mercury, and the priest of Jupiter. The scene is before the house of the farmer.

A C T I.

Chremylus's servant is seen walking a few paces before his master; and, by railing at him in a humorous manner, acquaints the audience, that they are returning from the temple of Apollo, from whence Chremylus had followed a blind man, whom he is as fearful of losing sight of, as if he had found a treasure. Accordingly Chremylus appears walking close to the blind man, and after some altercation with Cario, his servant, he relates his adventure to him in these terms:

C H R E M Y L U S.

Well, I will tell thee; for of all my domestics thou art, in my opinion, the most faithful. (*Aside*) I mean the most roguish. Know then, that notwithstanding I have all my life loved justice, and revered the Gods, yet I am poor and miserable.

C A R I O.

Ay, I know it very well.

GHRE-

CHREMYLUS.

And yet others, who are guilty of sacrilege, who are public incendiaries, informers, and practice every kind of villany, thrive and grow rich.

CARIO.

That is true likewise.

CHREMYLUS.

I resolved therefore to go and consult the oracle, as concluding my miserable days to be near a period; to know of the God whether it will not be the interest of my only son to adopt other morals, and become crafty, unjust, and wicked; since these are the only qualifications which raise a man's fortune.

CARIO.

And what answer did the God from the shade of his thick laurels return?

CHREMYLUS.

Apollo commanded me to follow the first person I met after I went out of his temple, and not to quit him a moment, and to prevail on him to go with me to my house.

CARIO, *looking at the blind man, and shaking his head.*

And it was this fine person you met then?

CHREMYLUS.

Yes.

CARIO.

Faith, master, you have not comprehended the meaning of the oracle; and yet it is clearer than the sun. The God commands you to educate your son in the manner and principles of his fellow citizens.

CHREMYLUS.

From whence do you draw this inference?

CARIO.

A blind man might see it. Is there any thing more advantageous or more fashionable at present than roguery?

Cario means, that his master having asked the God whether he ought not to bring up his son in fraud and injustice, the oracle had answered

answered him in the plainest manner, by bidding him fasten upon the first comer, and carry him to his house; because, in reality, there was no person to be found in Athens who was not a rogue, and consequently a good model for his son.

Chremylus is not satisfied with this explanation: he cannot help imagining that there is some deeper mystery in the oracle; and he resolves to question the blind man, who hitherto has continued silent. Cario begins with the true insolence of a servant to one whom he fancies his inferior: he threatens him with a drubbing; and the blind man answers with a curse. He says the same thing to Chremylus, who had not taken his former abuse to himself. At length after some ludicrous expressions concerning this unknown, the blind man tells him that he is Plutus, the God of Riches. Art thou Plutus, says the servant, and in this miserable condition? The God gives a humorous reason for his being so dirty: he is but just come out of the house of Patroclus, he says, a rich miser, who never since he was born would be at the expence of a bath to wash himself. This Patroclus, and several others who are named, were persons well known in Athens.

Plutus being asked how it happened that he is blind, replies, "Jupiter, out of envy to mortals afflicted me thus; for when I was a child, I threatened him that I would only visit the just and the wise among them; and that I might not be able to distinguish those from the others, he struck me with blindness."

CHREMYLUS.

And yet it is only by the wise and just that he is honoured.

PLUTUS.

Very true.

CHREMYLUS.

Pray tell me then whether, if your sight was restored to you, you would still continue your resolution to avoid the dwellings of the wicked?

PLUTUS.

I would.

CHREMYLUS.

And you would frequent the just?

VOL. III.

Ggg

PLU-

P L U T U S.

Most certainly; for it is a long while since I have seen any of them.

C H R E M Y L U S.

No wonder truly; for I who have good eyes have seen none lately.

Plutus now desires to be suffered to depart, since he had given them a full account of himself: but this is the very cause of their detaining him; for who, when once they have got Plutus in their possession, will suffer him to leave them! All this is allegorical, as is the greatest part of this comedy. Chremylus makes use of threats and prayers to prevail upon Plutus to remain with him; he protests to him that he is the only honest man in Athens. "Oh, (says the God of riches) this is the language of you all when you are endeavouring to gain me; but no sooner am I in your possession, than you bid adieu to virtue." He adds, that all men, without exception, are wicked; which assertion gives great offence to the slave. The master tempts Plutus by promises: "I will restore you to your sight, says he to the God." Plutus refuses this offer, lest he should displease Jupiter, who, well knowing the corruption of mortals, would doubtless punish him severely for having consented to receive this benefit from them. Hereupon the farmer, after throwing out some impious expressions against Jupiter, undertakes to prove to Plutus, that he is more powerful than the sovereign of the Gods. This he does by a very scandalous allegory, the impiety of which reflects entirely upon the Athenians: for, according to him, it is by Plutus that Jupiter reigns; by Plutus that sacrifices are offered to him; by Plutus that a favourable reception at Corinth is procured*. Money, he says, and presents, are the great springs upon which justice, love, and the arts, all turn. This was usual with Aristophanes; and this passage is animated, like many others in his comedies, with personal satire: the actors pointing out certain of the spectators†.

P L U T U S.

How wretched am I never to have known this before!

* The sense of this proverb may be easily perceived. It is not every one who can go to Corinth. this kind in Aristophanes, that there is no room for cavilling at this conjecture; for here it is only a conjecture, but there is

† We have seen so many examples of good foundation for it.

CHREMYLUS, to Cario.

Is it not from Plutus that the power and the insolence of the great king proceeds? [*The king of Persia.*]

CARIO, to Chremylus.

Is it not by means of Plutus that assemblies are held for public affairs? [*Because there was money given to all that assisted at these assemblies.*]

CHREMYLUS, to Plutus.

Is it not you who fits out our fleets?

CARIO.

Is it not you who pays our troops in Corinth? [*Alluding to the Corinthian war, which was mentioned in the Female Orators. It lasted six years and more.*]

CHREMYLUS.

From whence arises the grief of Pamphilus? [*A celebrated officer of the revenue whose estate was confiscated.*]

CARIO.

And the distress of Belenopolis? [*His parasite.*]

CHREMYLUS.

And the insolence of Agyrrius? [*The commander of the Athenian fleet under Thrasybulus; he is the same person who is mentioned in the Female Orators.*]

CARIO.

And the tales of Philoprus? [*A man who was reduced to great poverty, and supported himself by telling stories.*]

CHREMYLUS.

And the auxiliaries we have sent to the Egyptians? [*By Chabrias, who had without permission withdrawn to the court of Nectanebus, king*

* All of them well known at Athens.

† The poet possibly means another Pamphilus, who was at that time general of the Athenian army, and besieging Egina: he was besieged himself in his camp by the

Lacedaemonians, and suffered all the miseries of famine during five months. Aristophanes perhaps alludes to this fact, which is related by Xenophon. B. 5.

of Egypt, whose fortune he followed. Emil Prob. This happy conjecture is M. Paulmier's.

CARIO.

And the passion of Nais for Philonides? [*A rich man, but old, and a fool. He was beloved by Naias (not Lais) according to Arbenius's correction. L. 13. c. 6. 7.*]

CHREMYLUS.

And the tower of Timotheus? [*A citadel, or palace belonging to Timotheus, the son of Canon.*]

CARIO, *aside.*

Oh may it fall upon thy head!

CHREMYLUS.

In a word, thou art the sole author of all things, whether good or evil.

PLUTUS.

How can I do all this, I who am but one?

CHREMYLUS.

Oh, you can do much more than all I have said. We are weary of all things, but are never weary of you: of you we can never have too much, we are surfeited even with love.

CARIO, *eagerly.*

With bread.

CHREMYLUS.

With science.

CARIO, *eagerly.*

With sweatmeats.

CHREMYLUS.

With honour.

CARIO, *eagerly.*

With cakes.

CHREMYLUS.

With virtue.

CARIO, *eagerly.*

With figs.

CHRE-

CHREMYLUS.

With glory.

CARIO, *eagerly*.

With pudding.

CHREMYLUS.

With power.

CARIO, *eagerly*.

With porridge.

CHREMYLUS.

But of Plutus we never think we have enough.

These strokes of satire, and this kind of humorous dialogues were judged by Moliere to have so much the spirit of true comedy, that he has not failed to imitate them in many of his pieces, which are so well known that it would be needless to quote them.

Plutus, notwithstanding the praises they give him, still returns to his point: he is apprehensive that he has not this universal power which is attributed to him. Chremylus and Cario reproach him with his being a most faint-hearted deity. He protests he is quite otherwise; but that some robbers having failed in their design upon him, called his foresight and prudence timidity. The farmer promises to restore him to the use of his eyes, and this upon the credit of an oracle delivered by Apollo himself. Hereupon the God of riches has a fling at Apollo.

"What, says he, is Apollo also in your plot?" Doubtless he hints at the riches in the temple of Delphos.

Plutus, at length appearing less incredulous concerning the possibility of his cure, Chremylus sends Cario instantly to seek for all the peasants in the neighbourhood, who, on account of their virtue are starving; and, in the mean time, takes Plutus with him to his house. All this is not done without some allegorical strokes of satire, such as these: "I never, says Plutus, go into any stranger's house without the utmost concern, for I am scarce ever used well in it. If I visit a miser he buries me alive; and when a friend asks him to lend him a trifling sum, he swears boldly that he never saw me; but if I go to a wild prodigal fellow immersed in debauchery and gaming, I am in a moment turned naked out of doors."

The

The reader must certainly perceive in this act a strong resemblance between the character of Plutus and the Sganarelle* of Moliere. They endeavour to persuade Sganarelle that he is a great physician; and he resolves to assume the character of one, since they will have it so. As Sganarelle becomes a physician, whether he will or not, so Plutus becomes the Jupiter of the Athenians.

A C T II.

Cario enters, followed by a croud of peasants, whom he has drawn to him by the hopes of hearing great news. But this scene being full of the lowest humour, and abounding in puns, although many satirical strokes are scattered through it, cannot possibly please a modern taste, notwithstanding all the endeavours of the commentators, and of madame Dacier, for that purpose: What I call puns are however allusions drawn from Homer and several tragedies, but turned into rustic buffooneries.

The peasants being all gathered together, and the debate between them and Cario ended, Chremylus comes out of his house and intreats them to help him to guard Plutus, whom he has found. That instant Blepsidemus appears; he is the friend of Chremylus, but greatly astonished at the report of his being suddenly become extremely rich. All the poignancy of this scene consists in the affected incredulity of this pretended friend, who is not able to conceive how his companion should have grown rich without being a rogue; and obstinately persists in his endeavours to persuade him to acknowledge his robbery, to the end that he may have a bribe for keeping his secret. He even promises him to stop the mouths of the judges, provided he will furnish him with a little money for that purpose. "Harkee, friend, says he; I will make up this matter for you at a small expence. Be silent. I will gag the orators."

C H R E M Y L U S.

Faith, friend, you appear to me to be that sort of man who would lay out fifty crowns for me, and charge me two hundred.

This pleasant dispute continues a long while. Blepsidemus, notwithstanding all the protestations of innocence made by his friend, persists obstinately in his opinion that he is guilty. Chremylus grows angry, but this has no effect. Blepsidemus always answers like one fully persuaded that he is not mistaken, and determined neither to give up his point nor to listen to any thing he urges in his defence. Madame Pernelle treats Orgon in the same manner in the Tartuffe.

* Le Médecin malgré lui de Moliere.

Moliere studied Aristophanes with great care, and few persons know all the obligations he has to him. At length Blepsidemus being, notwithstanding his obstinacy, made sensible of the truth, expresses a great desire to see Plutus; but Chremylus tells him that first they must endeavour to restore this God to his sight. Blepsidemus refers him to the physicians. "To the physicians, replies Chremylus: "why, are there any physicians in a city where there are no fees for them, but a great deal of contempt?" This is not the case at present. The conclusion is, that both agree to carry Plutus to the temple of Esculapius the God of physic.

Poverty, in person, enters suddenly in a great rage with the two old men, and peremptorily commands them to lay aside their intention. There is in this place a stroke of satire against one of the tragic poets; for Blepyrus takes Poverty for a fury, and Chremylus objects that she has no torch. She likewise says some smart things to the old men; but as neither of them know her to be poverty, one supposes she is a fish-woman and the other an hostess. Probably the poet here pointed out two persons who were among the audience. At length she declares herself to be Poverty. At this dreadful sound Blepsidemus is for running away; but is prevented by his friend, who, depending upon the assistance of Plutus, declares he will drive this detestable divinity out of Greece. Poverty, suppressing her anger for a few moments, consents to argue this matter calmly with them; and attempts to prove, that they cannot bring a greater misfortune upon the Greeks than the banishing her would be. The Chorus of peasants, who are still upon the stage, exhort the two champions to defend their cause vigorously against Poverty.

Chremylus begins. He tells her that it is fit the good should be happy, and the wicked miserable; and consequently that Plutus ought to be restored to his sight, because he will then bestow his blessings upon virtuous persons only, and by that means all mortals will be induced to become virtuous.

Poverty answers, and proves in form, that if this should happen, and if all mortals were to be rich, there would be an end of subordination in the world; there would be no masters, no servants: arts would be neglected, and consequently riches would be useless; and concludes with declaring that indigence is the mother of all good government.

Chremylus, taking the thing in the worst light, draws a striking picture of extreme indigence, by which many miserable wretches are

are reduced to want the common necessities of life. Poverty therefore, in his opinion, by proving too much, proves nothing at all.

Poverty replies, and reproaches the two old men, or rather the Athenians in general, with confounding together virtue and vice; a criminal and voluntary indigence*, with a decent competence; Thrasybulus with Dionysius. Thrasybulus expelled from Athens the thirty tyrants, whom the Lacedemonians, after the conquest of that city by Lysander, had established there. Dionysius was tyrant of Syracuse, and is too well known to make any account of him necessary here.

The countryman answers, and declaims against parsimony, which produces great labour and small profit; not even sufficient to bury the unhappy sufferer. But Poverty is not the dupe of these evasive arguments: she draws a comparison between Plutus and herself; and shews, that by him mortals gain nothing but hereditary diseases; whereas she bestows health and vigour upon them, which render them formidable to their enemies. She proceeds to more elevated advantages. Plutus, she says, produces all sorts of vices, pride and insolence particularly; but she gives birth to virtues only, to justice and moderation. Here there is a stroke at the judges and orators. "While men are poor, continues she, they are virtuous; "when they become rich, they are wicked." Chremylus acknowledges that to be true; but all the fine arguments urged by Poverty, procure her no favour. In vain she remonstrates that men avoid her only because she would make them better, as children fly their fathers who endeavour to teach them wisdom. The countryman falls upon Jupiter, and impiously declares, that the God keeps Plutus to himself, and gives Poverty to mankind. The old Goddess, who did not expect this charge, answers it in a very singular manner. "If Jupiter was rich, says she, he would not give "only a simple crown of laurel to the conquerors in the Olympic "games." It is not easy to know whether she intends here to justify, or to ridicule Jupiter, under the pretence of justifying him. This scene has such a farcastic air, notwithstanding the morality which appears throughout it, that we can think no otherwise but that the poet was resolved to burlesque every thing, religious as well as profane. He treats as ludicrously the feasts made by the rich every month for Proserpine; and which the poor took care to have the best part of, saying, that the Moon or Hecate had devoured all. Poverty is dismissed with the fereasons; and in revenge declares, that

* Which good men never need fear.

they will one day recal her. The old men having Plutus in their possession, despise her threats, and think of nothing but conducting the blind deity to the temple of Esculapius, that he may be cured.

A C T III.

All the business hitherto must have doubtless been transacted in the evening, and very late in the evening; for it is not likely that Aristophanes would crowd a whole night and more into two acts. Plutus is now to be led to the temple of the God of Physic, to lie there, as it was usual for those persons to do who were desirous of being cured through his operation. But as it is probable that it was sufficient if the patients slept there a few hours, we may suppose that Plutus did not stay long in the temple, without being under the necessity of believing with madame Dacier, that the two first acts of this comedy were acted a little before sun-set, and the three last in the morning. Cario therefore returning from the temple early in the morning, and perceiving the peasants who have been waiting to hear the success of the operation performed by Esculapius, cries out, "Good news, my friends; take courage, ye honest old men, who have fared so poorly even at the festivals of Theseus, ye are all going to be made happy." In these festivals, celebrated in honour of Theseus an ancient king of Athens, an entertainment was provided for the poor; but this custom, through avarice, degenerated into nothing.

The peasants, full of eager curiosity, crowd about Cario, who tells them plainly, that Plutus has recovered the use of his sight. Hereupon they return thanks to Esculapius, and break into cries and exclamations of joy, which bring the wife of Chremylus out of her house. Madame Dacier calls her Myrrhina, and gives names likewise to several other characters in the play, which the poet himself has not done. The wife of Chremylus, as inquisitive as the villagers, expresses an eager desire to know the cause of these joyful shouts. Her servant behaves exactly like the servants of Terence and Moliere; or rather, these last act exactly like them. In vain she presses him to tell her in one word: he must relate every circumstance in order as they happened, before he will come to the point.

This recital, which is often broke in upon by the mistress, is a very severe satire against Esculapius, or rather against his priests; and has in it much comic humour, as well through the frequent interruptions of the peasants, as that mixture of malice and simplicity, so apparent in the slave. Cario begins, as has been said,

ab ovo. Plutus is first dipped in the sea. "A fine ceremony, indeed!" says the wife, to plunge a poor old man into cold water." This is said in ridicule of the pagan ablutions. Cario continues in this manner: "When we arrived at the temple, the usual offerings were placed on the altar, and Plutus was laid upon a bed, after which we all lay down as conveniently as we could." "Why," says the wife of Chremylus, were there more besides Plutus who needed the assistance of Esculapius?" "Certainly, replies the slave; for Neoclides was there, who, though blind, is a dexterous thief." This Neoclides was a judge, or orator, famous for his extortions, who had a disorder in his eyes: he has been already mentioned in the Female Orators.

Cario mentions him among many other diseased persons. "Mean time, says he, the priest put out the lights, and enjoined us to go to sleep, or at least to observe a religious silence, in case we should hear the hissing of the Serpent-God. All slept, or pretended to sleep; but I smelling a mess of pottage which an old woman had by her, was so allured by the flavour that I could not close my eyes: but, putting my head out of bed, observed all that passed, and saw the priest softly steal away all the victuals which had been laid on the altar, and put them into a sack. I was induced by this example, to imitate the piety of the sacrificer; and therefore seized the old woman's porridge." "Ah, wretch, cries the wife of Chremylus, hadst thou no fear of the God?" "Yes, replies the slave, I was afraid that he would be beforehand with me. The old woman, pursues he, hearing a noise, put out her hand; but I, pretending to be the sacred serpent, hissed and bit at the same time. She drew in her hand again, and I fell to supping the porridge; after which I composed myself to sleep. At length the God arrived." Cario here relates a vulgar trick he played at the God's approach, which made one of his daughters blush, and the other hold her nose; but as for Esculapius, he, in his employment of a physician, was too much accustomed to such smells, to be discomposed at what he had done. It is really surprising that an Athenian should dare to ridicule thus openly the public superstitions; and here I must refer the reader to some former observations concerning a passage in Plutarch, of which I shall say something more in the conclusion.

Cario, that he may omit no part of a narration which, in our age, can have nothing in it very interesting, describes the ceremony with which the God gravely visited each patient, but particularly the in-
former

former Neoclides*; how he spread a plaister with an ointment made of garlick, onions, benjamin, and vinegar, and opening his eyes laid it upon them, saying to him maliciously, when he offered to run away, "Hold, hold, thou hast a hundred times deceived me with thy oaths, but now I will take care thou shalt go no more to the courts of justice." He next relates how the Deity, by means of a sacred veil, a mysterious whistle, and two serpents †, which licked the eyes of Plutus, cured the God; so that by a double act of benevolence in Esculapius, the God of Riches became clear-sighted, and Neoclides the informer blind. Cario declares that this prodigy made all the patients forget their diseases; that a great croud had gathered round Plutus; that every place resounded with joyful acclamations; and that the God was returning in triumph to the house of Chremylus. His wife, overjoyed at this happy adventure, goes in a hurry to prepare an entertainment for the new guest.

Plutus arrives immediately: he adores the Sun, which he had not beheld for so great a number of years: he salutes Athens, his beloved city: he repents of the blunders which he had committed during his state of blindness; and promises, that for the future, he will lavish his bounties only on good men.

Chremylus, mean time, tired with the solicitations of a croud of friends, whom his change of fortune had gathered about him, bids them all go *to the crows*; that is, *to go and hang themselves*. The wife comes out of her house with a basket of fruit in her hand, to strew before her guest, according to the custom; but Plutus desires her to delay this ceremony, till he has entered her house; "For it is not fit, says he, to throw fruit among the spectators, in order to bribe their applause."

THE WIFE OF CHREMYLUS.

You say right; for yonder I see Xenicus ‡ stand up ready to scramble for my figs.

* See what has been said concerning this Neoclides a little above, and in the Female Orators.

† It is well known that serpents were consecrated to the God Esculapius, and that Esculapius himself was transported with great solemnity from Epidaurus to Rome, in the form of a serpent. It was doubtless the extreme prejudice of the an-

ents, in favour of the art of physick, which was the cause of their raising Esculapius to a divinity; for they deified whatever administered to their necessities. As for serpents, they either expressed the sagacity and wisdom which a physician is supposed to possess, or they were the symbols of those remedies which sometimes serpents afford.

‡ *Xenicus*, a proper name.

We have seen a stroke of the same kind against the comic poets before. Even these trifles make known the genius of the ancient theatre, where it was customary to interrupt the action frequently in order to throw out some sarcasm at the audience. Plautus has often copied this ancient custom, and Moliere has done it in his *Miser*.

A C T IV.

Cario, forced out of the house by the smoke of the sacrifices, comes upon the stage to indulge his joy for this sudden change from extreme want to abundance; which he expresses in his vulgar manner. Their graneries are heaped with corn, their vessels full of wine, their trunks of gold, water changed to oil, oil into rich ointments, their wooden utensils into brass, their brass into silver; these make part of his expressions of transport.

An honest man enters with his servant, and desires Cario to admit him into the house, that he may pay his thanks to Plutus. "I had a good estate, says he, which I inherited by my ancestors, and out of it I supplied the necessities of my unfortunate friends, for I was fully persuaded that I could not make a better use of it."

C A R I O.

You did not long continue rich at this rate.

G O O D M A N.

You are right.

C A R I O.

You were also in your turn reduced to poverty.

G O O D M A N.

You are right. But I imagined that those whom I relieved in their necessities would, like faithful friends, assist me in mine; but they all turned their backs upon me: none of them would know me.

C A R I O.

Ay, and I engage, laughed at you heartily.

G O O D M A N.

You are right *. I scarce left myself any thing, they had so exhausted me.

* Madame Dacier has omitted this repetition of the same Greek word thrice: which is truly comic. Aristophanes designed it expressly.

CARIO.

C A R I O.

But they will no longer have cause to laugh at you.

G O O D M A N,

True; and therefore am I come to return thanks to the Deity who resides in your house.

C A R I O.

But pray tell me what you are going to do with that old cloke which your servant carries after you?

G O O D M A N.

I intend to dedicate it to the God.

C A R I O.

It looks like the same which you wore when you were initiated into the great mysteries. [*He means the mysteries of Ceres, celebrated at Eleusis, a town of Attica. The garments which the Athenians had on at that time were held sacred, and they wore them to rags. Cario rallies him here.*]

G O O D M A N.

It is not that, but I have shivered in it these thirteen winters.

C A R I O.

And those old shoes there.

G O O D M A N.

They have served me as long.

C A R I O.

And will you dedicate them too?

G O O D M A N.

Most certainly.

C A R I O:

Fine presents these for the God of Riches!

Just as they are upon the point of entering into the house of Chremylus, they are stopped by a man grieving and lamenting most piteously. They ask him the cause of his sorrow, and he complains bitterly of Plutus: upon which, he is known to be an informer, with

with his witness attending his steps. The humour of this scene consists in this fellow's asserting that his employment is that of a good citizen, and of great use to the common wealth*. "For who," he "says, would be careful to obey the laws, but through fear of him?" He asserts that all the riches which he sees about the persons he speaks to, belongs to him. The citizen and Cario exclaim against his impudence; and, diverting themselves with his distress, oblige him to strip. Cario afterwards cloaths him again with the tattered garments of the good man: he hangs the old shoes about his neck, and scoffingly bids him be gone. The informer, who was very glad of an opportunity to exercise his trade, calls his witness, but he had run away in great terror. This was a spectacle very pleasing to the Athenians.

The following scene presents us with an old woman, who complains of the infidelity of a young man whom she was fond of, and on whom she had lavished great sums of money. It is to Chremylus, who comes out of his house, and to the Chorus of peasants, that she addresses her discourse; for the servant had carried the good man in with him, to pay his adorations to the God, his benefactor. It is not necessary to dwell long upon this scene, nor upon that of the youth, who comes in soon afterwards, and insults the old woman's grief. We see plainly what Aristophanes has been able to make of such a subject. It is sufficient to say, that in this act, he introduces all these personages, whose characters are so diversified incidentally, either to complain of Plutus, to thank him, or to implore his favour; and they all go into the house of Chremylus. There is the same turn of comic humour in the third and fourth act of the *Birds*, where several persons of very original characters arrive naturally one after the other. These scenes, of which the poet has several in his comedies, resemble greatly, both in the turn and the characters, the French scenes of Gherardi. There is the same kind of wit, the same spirit, the same low humour. Several passages in the scene between the old woman and the young man may be found scattered throughout the Italian comedies; but in this, as well as all the rest, it is plain that both the ancient and modern poets have rather met by chance than design.

* Athens had a great number of these good citizens, who lived by her wages, and at the expence of individuals, whom they endeavoured to ensnare and accuse them, whether guilty or not.

ACT V.

The fifth act is not much more likely to please the readers of our age than any of the preceding: it seems to be full of that sort of impiety so frequently to be found in the ancient theatre, and which we shall in another place endeavour to explain. It is a continued satire against Jupiter and the Gods: but examined more closely, we shall find, that this satire falls directly upon the avarice of the Athenians, who made gold their Divinity. In this act we must rather catch the spirit than attend to the literal sense, and represent to ourselves the situation of the spectators, all of them misers, with their ideas concerning the Gods of Homer.

Mercury, with the low archness of a theatrical valet, enters; and after knocking loud at the doors of Chremylus's house, hides himself. Cario opens it grumbling. The God makes an apology, and intreats him to call out the master of the house, his wife, the dog, the servants, and the sow; for thus he jumbles them together. The affair, he says, which he has to communicate, is of the utmost importance. Here we see Mercury and Socia in the *Amphitruon*, but with this difference, that whereas Mercury is the strongest in *Plautus* and *Moliere*, in *Aristophanes* he is the suppliant. However, he begins with assuming an air of insolence and authority, and threatens Cario with the indignation of Jupiter, who, ever since *Plutus* was cured, had been totally neglected, and no sacrifices offered to him. We see the same fine allegory in the fifth act of the *Birds*, which signifies, that in prosperity men forget the Gods. Mercury is soon obliged to alter his tone, and descends to make humble supplications for himself, being almost starved. He enumerates the presents he used to receive from the tavern-keepers, to bribe him to favour their cheats*: he regrets the loss of those cakes, the entrails of victims, and the wine which used to be given him on festivals; ludicrous complaints, which afford the relentless Cario a fine opportunity of rejecting him, with equal humour. "Is it thus," then, says Mercury, that you abandon your friends?"

C A R I O.

Tell me how I can assist you.

* As the tutelary *Deity of thieves*. It is this sort of abuse of the Divinities which *Aristophanes* ridicules. The Athenians, who understood raillery, entered into his

meaning: therefore the poignancy of this satire is levelled at the spectators, and not the Gods.

M E R.

MERCURY.

You may, if you please, give me one of those loaves, and some of the flesh of the victims you are sacrificing within. [*He plays the parasite here, to mark that sort of character among the Athenians.*]

CARIO.

I dare not do that.

MERCURY.

Dare not, wretch! Why, when you used to steal any vessel from your master, did I not always assist you to conceal it?

CARIO.

Yes, that you might partake of the booty; a good cake always fell to your share.

MERCURY.

Agreed: but then you used to eat that cake.

CARIO.

And was I not in the right to do so? Had you any share in my whipping when I was taken in any of my thefts?

MERCURY.

No remembrance of the past. Since thou art now happy *, take me into the number of the servants.

CARIO.

What, will you leave the Gods to dwell with us?

MERCURY.

Most certainly; for you are a thousand times more blest †.

CARIO.

But are you not afraid of being branded with the infamy of being a fugitive ‡?

* In the Greek it is, *Since thou hast got Phyle*. A proverbial expression which took its rise from the treaty which was made after the expulsion of the thirty tyrants by Thrasibulus, who begun his enterprise with taking possession of Phyle, a fortress of Attica. By the treaty it was provided, that

no one should, for the future, revive the remembrance of past quarrels.

† Alluding to the proverb, *Happier than the Gods*.

‡ Like Alcibiades, and many other Athenians before and after him.

MERCURY.

That is every man's country where he lives best.

CARIO.

Well, you have my consent; but pray, what are you fit for? what can you do?

MERCURY, *alluding to his several surnames, and here to that of door-keeper.*

I will be your door-keeper.

CARIO.

No, no; we have no need of any artifices.

MERCURY, *alluding to another of his surnames.*
Make me your merchant.

CARIO.

We are rich now *, what should we do with such a pedlar as you, to sell our wines for us.

MERCURY, *alluding to one of his surnames which signified the God of cheats and robbers.*

Have you no occasion for a dexterous fellow?

CARIO.

No, no; we will have none but honest men about us now.

MERCURY, *in allusion to his employment of pointing out the roads.*

Well, you certainly want a guide?

* The Lacedemonians were always at the head of Greece, and commanded the armies in those wars wherein the cities of Greece were engaged. The Athenians, when they grew powerful, contested for this pre-eminence; and in the war with the Persians, they carried their point by their riches, and the great influence they had acquired. At the latter end of the Peloponnesian war, Lacedemon resumed the upper

hand; but Athens, in the Corinthian war, drew herself by degrees out of her slavery. The poet's allusion here to this pre-eminence of the Lacedemonians, is very fine. Monsieur Paulmier is the first, and perhaps the only one who has attended to the wit of this passage. The meaning of it is, We are now under no necessity of depending upon any other state of Greece since we are grown wealthy.

CARIO.

A guide! What, when Plutus has recovered his eye-sight.

MERCURY, *in allusion to one of his surnames, which expresses his superintendence over public diversions; such as music, theatrical entertainments, and the exercises of the body.*

Make me then the master of your sports. How! are you silent to this too? Surely Plutus has need of a man who can direct his amusements, shows, games, and gallant entertainments*.

CARIO.

The fellow has reason on his side. He has not left me a word to say: how fortunate is it to have various occupations! for by one or the other he has found out a livelihood. I am no longer surprised that our judges draw lots at more tribunals than one, that they may not fail of having causes to hear.

MERCURY.

Well, I may go in then.

CARIO.

All in good time: but first go to the well, and wash the guts of the victims for a specimen of your abilities.

The following scene is nearly formed on the same model. If Mercury and the Gods have been starving ever since Plutus recovered his sight, it may be easily imagined, that the priest of Jupiter is not in a better condition. He comes in person to enlist himself under the banners of Plutus, and tells Cario to what a miserable extremity he has been reduced by the cessation of sacrifices. Ever since the world has been made rich, he says, no one offers any victims to Jupiter. No merchant, at his return from a voyage, makes any sacrifice now: no lawyer, when he has gained a cause, thinks himself obliged to pay his acknowledgments to Jupiter; and, in consequence, there are no more delicious feasts for his priest. The temple is deserted, and even profaned by the insolence of passengers. The priest therefore declares, that he is resolved to quit

* In the text it is contests in music or poetry, or such games as were in use among the Greeks. Madame Dacier, after Charles

Gerard, has given us a judicious explanation of these allusions, which he barely sketched out.

the service of Jupiter, and engage in that of Plutus. Cario comforts him, by assuring him that Plutus is the true Jupiter the *Preserver*; and that by putting Plutus in the place of Jupiter, all will go well with him again. He adds, that it is resolved, Plutus shall be placed behind the temple of Minerva, to guard the treasure of Athens. This, says Meursius*, is an allusion to the statue of Plutus the *Clear-sighted*; which was erected on the citadel of Athens, in the fortress behind the temple of Minerva, where the public treasure was kept concealed.

Cario, to convince the priest of the truth of what he says, gives him a lighted torch to carry before Plutus, who is to be immediately transported to the temple. The old woman mentioned before comes out of the house in the train of Plutus; and this makes the third and last scene of the act, which is very short. Cario assigns this woman her employment in the ceremony of the consecration; which is, to carry a vase full of pulse upon her head, in honour of the Deity, according to the custom, when new statues were consecrated. The old woman had drest herself very fine, but with another intention, which the slave ridicules in the following speech: "This pot is the very reverse of those we put on the fire; for in them the skum is at the top, here it is at the bottom." He means the grey hairs of the old woman who carried the vase upon her head †.

The Chorus having nothing more to do, think it reasonable that they should follow the procession singing; and this is the whole fifth act, which consists but of three short scenes. We see plainly, that in this comedy, which is a severe satire upon the avarice of the Athenians, who were devoted to Plutus as to their sole divinity, Aristophanes puts on an appearance of impiety, to expose the real impiety of the Athenians.

* Meursii Cecrop. c. 27. the Greek word, which signifies both the

† This is the sense which Plutarch gives scum of a pot and an old woman. to this passage: there is also a pun upon

THE GENERAL CONCLUSION.

Summary of
the four arti-
cles treated
of in this dis-
course.

I. **T**HUS I have given a faithful extract of the remains of Aristophanes. That I have not shewn them in their true form, I am not afraid that any body will complain. I have given an account of every thing as far as it was consistent with moral decency. No pen, however cynical or heathenish, would venture to produce in open day the horrid passages which I have put out of sight; and instead of regretting any part that I have suppressed, the very suppression will easily shew to what degree the Athenians were infected with licentiousness of imagination and corruption of principles. If the taste of antiquity allows us to preserve what time and barbarity have hitherto spared, religion and virtue at least oblige us not to spread it before the eyes of mankind. To end this work in an useful manner, let us examine in a few words the four particulars which are most striking in the eleven pieces of Aristophanes.

Character of
ancient co-
medy.

II. The first is the character of the antient comedy, which has no likeness to any thing in nature. Its genius is so wild and strange, that it scarce admits a definition. In what class of comedy must we place it? It appears to me to be a species of writing by itself. If we had Phrynichus, Plato, Eupolis, Critinus, Ameipias, and so many other celebrated rivals of Aristophanes, of whom all that we can find are a few fragments scattered in Plutarch, Athenias, and Suidas, we might compare them with our poet, settle the general scheme, observe the minuter differences, and form a complete notion of their comick stage. But for want of all this we can fix only on Aristophanes, and it is true that he may be in some measure sufficient to furnish a tolerable judgment of the old comedy; for if we believe him, and who can be better credited? he was the most daring of all his brethren the poets, who practised the same kind of writing. Upon this supposition we may conclude that the comedy of those days consisted in an allegory drawn out and continued; an allegory never very regular, but often ingenious, and almost always carried beyond strict propriety, of satire keen and biting, but diversified, sprightly, and unexpected; so that the wound was given before it was perceived. Their points
of

of satire were thunderbolts, and their wild figures, with their variety and quickness, had the effect of lightning. Their imitation was carried even to resemblance of persons, and their common entertainments was a parody of rival poets joined, if I may so express it, with a parody of manners and habits.

But it would be tedious to draw out to the reader that which he will already have perceived better than myself. I have no design to anticipate his reflections; and therefore shall only sketch the picture, which he must finish by himself: he will pursue the subject farther, and form to himself a view of the common and domestic life of the Athenians, of which this kind of comedy was a picture, with some aggravation of the features: he will bring within his view all the customs, manners, and vices, and the whole character of the people of Athens. By bringing all these together he will fix in his mind an indelible idea of a people in whom so many contrarieties were united, and who in a manner that can scarce be expressed, connected nobility with the cast of Athens, wisdom with madness, rage for novelty with a bigotry for antiquity, the politeness of a monarchy with the roughness of a republick, refinement with coarseness, independence with slavery, haughtiness with servile compliance, severity of manners with debauchery, a kind of irreligion with piety. We shall do this in reading as in travelling through different nations; we make ourselves masters of their characters by combining their different appearances, and reflecting upon what we see.

III. The government of Athens makes a fine part of the ancient comedy. In most states the mystery of government is confined within the walls of the cabinet; even in commonwealths it does not pass but through five or six heads, who rule those that think themselves the rulers. Oratory dares not touch it, and comedy still less. Cicero himself did not speak freely upon so nice a subject as the Roman commonwealth; but the Athenian eloquence was informed of the whole secret, and searches the recesses of the human mind, to fetch it out and expose it to the people. Demosthenes and his contemporaries speak with a freedom at which we are astonished, notwithstanding the notion we have of a popular government, yet at what time but this did comedy adventure to claim the same rights with civil eloquence? The Italian comedy of the last age, all daring as it was, could for its boldness come into no competition with the ancient. It was limited to general satire, which was sometimes carried so far, that the malignity

was

The government of the Athenians.

was overlooked in an attention to the wild exaggeration, the unexpected strokes, the pungent wit, and the malignity concealed under such wild flights as became the character of harlequin. But though it so far resembled Aristophanes, our age is yet at a great distance from his, and the Italian comedy from his scenes. But with respect to the liberty of censuring the government, there can be no comparison made of one age or comedy with another. Aristophanes is the only writer of his kind, and is for that reason of the highest value. A powerful state set at the head of Greece, is the subject of his merriment, and that merriment is allowed by the state itself. This appears to us an inconsistency; but it is true that it was the interest of the state to allow it, though not always without inconveniency. It was a restraint upon the ambition and tyranny of single men, a matter of great importance to a people so very jealous of their liberty. Cleon, Alcibiades, Lamachus, and many other generals and magistrates were kept under by fear of the comick strokes of a poet so little cautious as Aristophanes. He was once indeed in danger of paying dear for his wit. He professed, as he tells us himself, to be of great use by his writings to the state; and rated his merit so high as to complain that he was not rewarded. But, under pretence of this publick spirit, he spared no part of the publick conduct, neither was government, councils, revenues, popular assemblies, secret proceedings in judicature, choice of ministers, the government of the nobles, or that of the people spared.

The *Acharnians*, the *Peace*, and the *Birds*, are eternal monuments of the boldness of the poet, who was not afraid of censuring the government for the obstinate continuance of a ruinous war, for undertaking new ones, and feeding itself with wild imaginations, and running to destruction as it did for an idle point of honour.

Nothing can be more reproachful to the Athenians than his play of the *Knights*, when he represents under an allegory that may be easily seen through, the nation of the Athenians as an old doating fellow tricked by a new man, such as Cleon and his companions, who were of the same stamp.

A single glance upon *Lyssistrata* and the *Female Orators* must raise astonishment when the Athenian policy is set below the schemes of women, whom the author makes ridiculous for no other reason than to bring contempt upon their husbands, who held the helm of government.

The *Wasps* is written to expose the madness of people for law-suits and litigations, and a multitude of iniquities are laid open.

It may easily be gathered that notwithstanding the wise laws of Solon, which they still professed to follow, the government was falling into decay, for we are not to understand the jests of Aristophanes in the literal sense. It is plain that the corruption, though we should suppose it but half as much as we are told, was very great, for it ended in the destruction of Athens, which could scarce raise its head again, after it had been taken by Lyfander. Though we consider Aristophanes as a comick writer who deals in exaggeration, and bring down his stories to their true standard, we still find that the fundamentals of their government fail in almost all the essential points. That the people were inveigled by men of ambition; that all councils and decrees had their original in factious combinations; that avarice and private interest animated all their policy to the hurt of the publick; that their revenues were ill managed, their allies improperly treated; that their good citizens were sacrificed, and the bad put in places; that a mad eagerness for judicial litigation took up all their attention within, and that war was made without, not so much with wisdom and precaution as with temerity and good luck; that the love of novelty and fashion in the manner of managing the publick affairs was a madness universally prevalent; and that Melanthius says in Plutarch, the republick of Athens was continued only by the perpetual discord of those that managed its affairs. This remedied the dishonour by preserving the equilibrium, and was kept always in action by eloquence and comedy.

This is what in general may be drawn from the reading Aristophanes. The sagacity of the readers will go farther: they will compare the different forms of government by which that tumultuous people endeavoured to regulate or increase the democracy, which forms were all fatal to the state, because they were not built upon lasting foundations, and had all in them the principles of destruction. A strange contrivance it was to perpetuate a state by changing the just proportion which Solon had wisely settled between the nobles and the people; and by opening a gate to the skilful ambition of those who had art or courage enough to force themselves into the government by means of the people, whom they flattered with protections that they might more certainly crush them.

The tragic
poets rallied.

IV. Another part of the works of Aristophanes are his pleasant reflections upon the most celebrated poets; the shafts which he lets fly at the three heroes of tragedy, and particularly at Euripides, might incline the reader to believe that he had little esteem for those great men; and that probably the spectators that applauded him were of his opinion. This conclusion would not be just, as I have already shewn by arguments, which, if I had not offered them, the reader might have discovered better than I. But that I may leave no room for objections, and prevent any shadow of captiousness, I shall venture to observe, that posterity will not consider Racine as less a master of the French stage because his plays were ridiculed by parodies. Parody always fixes upon the best pieces, and was more to the taste of the Greeks than to ours. At present the high theatres give it up to stages of inferior rank; but in Athens the comic theatre considered parody as its principal ornament, for a reason which is worth examining. The ancient comedy was not like ours, a remote and delicate imitation; it was the art of gross mimicry, and would have been supposed to have missed its aim, had it not copied the mein, the walk, the dress, the motions of the face of those whom it exhibited. Now parody is an imitation of this kind; it is a change of serious to burlesque, by a slight variation of words, inflexion of voice, or an imperceptible art of mimicry. Parody is to poetry as a masque to a face. As the tragedies of Eschylus, of Sophocles, and of Euripides were much in fashion, and were known by memory to the people, the parodies upon them would naturally strike and please, when they were accompanied by the grimaces of a good comedian, who mimicked with archness a serious character. Such is the malignity of human nature; we love to laugh at those whom we esteem most, and by this make ourselves some recompence for the unwilling homage which we pay to merit. The parodies upon these poets made by Aristophanes ought to be considered rather as encomiums than satires. They give us occasion to examine whether the criticisms are just or not in themselves: but what is more important, they afford no proof that Euripides or his predecessors wanted the esteem of Aristophanes, or his age. The statues raised to their honour, the respect paid by the Athenians to their writings, and the careful preservation of those writings themselves, are immortal testimonies in their favour, and make it unnecessary for me to stop any longer upon so plausible a solution of so frivolous an objection.

V. The

V. The most troublesome difficulty, and that which, so far as I know, has not yet been cleared to satisfaction, is the contemptuous manner in which Aristophanes treats the Gods. Though I am persuaded in my own mind that I have found the true solution of this question, I am not sure that it will make more impression than that of M. Boivin, who contents himself with saying, that every thing was allowed to the comic poets; and that even atheism was permitted to the licentiousness of the stage: that the Athenians applauded all that made them laugh; and believed that Jupiter himself laughed with them at the smart sayings of a poet. Mr. Collier, an Englishman, in his remarks upon their stage, attempts to prove that Aristophanes was an open atheist. For my part I am not satisfied with the account either of one or the other, and think it better to venture a new system, of which I have already dropt some hints in this work. The truth is, that the Athenians professed to be great laughers; always ready for merriment on whatever subject. But it cannot be conceived that Aristophanes should, without punishment, publish himself an atheist, unless we suppose that atheism was the opinion likewise of the spectators, and of the judges commissioned to examine the plays; and yet this cannot be suspected of those who boasted themselves the most religious nation, and naturally the most superstitious of all Greece. How can we suppose those to be atheists who passed sentence upon Diagoras, Socrates, and Alcibiades, for impiety? These are glaring inconsistencies. To say like Mr. Boivin, for sake of getting clear of the difficulty, that Alcibiades, Socrates, and Diagoras attacked religion seriously, and were therefore not allowed, but that Aristophanes did it in jest, or was authorised by custom, would be to trifle with the difficulty, and not to clear it. Though the Athenians loved merriment, it is not likely that if Aristophanes had professed atheism, they would have spared him more than Socrates, who had as much life and pleasantry in his discourses, as the poet in his comedies. The pungent raillery of Aristophanes, and the fondness of the Athenians for it are therefore not the true reason why the poet was spared when Socrates was condemned. I shall now solve the question with great brevity.

The true answer to this question is given by Plutarch in his treatise of reading of the poets. Plutarch attempts to prove that youth is not to be prohibited the reading of the poets; but to be cautioned against such parts as may have bad effects. They are first to be prepossessed with this leading principle, that poetry is false and fabulous. He then enumerates at length the fables which

Homer and other poets have invented about their Deities; and concludes thus: "When therefore there is found in poetical compositions any thing strange and shocking, with respect to Gods, or Demi-Gods, or concerning the virtue of any excellent and renowned characters, he that should receive these fictions as truth would be corrupted by an erroneous opinion: but he that always keeps in his mind the fables and allusions, which it is the business of poetry to contrive, will not be injured by these stories, nor receive any ill impressions upon his thoughts, but will be ready to censure himself, if at any time he happens to be afraid, lest Neptune in his rage should split the earth, and lay open the infernal regions." Some pages afterwards, he tells us, "That religion is a thing difficult of comprehension, and above the understanding of poets; which it is, says he, necessary to have in mind when we read their fables."

The Pagans therefore had their fables, which they distinguished from their religion; for no one can be persuaded that Ovid intended his *Metamorphoses* as a true representation of the religion of the Romans. The poets were allowed their imaginations about their Gods, as things which had no regard to the public worship. Upon this principle, I say, as I said before, there was amongst the Pagans two sorts of religion; one a poetical, and a real religion: one practical, the other theatrical; a mythology for the poets, a theology for use. They had fables, and a worship, which though founded upon fable, was yet very different.

Diagoras, Socrates, Plato, and the philosophers of Athens, with Cicero, their admirer, and the other pretended wise men of Rome, are men by themselves. These were the atheists with respect to the ancients. We must not therefore look into Plato, or into Cicero for the real religion of the Pagans, as distinct from the fabulous. These two authors involve themselves in the clouds, that their opinions may not be discovered. They durst not openly attack the real religion; but destroyed it by attacking fable.

To distinguish here with exactness the agreement or difference between fable and religion is not at present my intention: it is not easy * to shew with exactness what was the Athenian notion of the nature of the Gods whom they worshipped. Plutarch himself tells us, that this was a thing very difficult for the philosophers. It

* See Saint Paul upon the subject of the *Ignoto Deus*.

is sufficient for me that the mythology and theology of the ancients were different at the bottom: that the names of the Gods continued the same; and that long custom gave up one to the caprices of the poets, without supposing the other affected by them. This being once settled upon the authority of the ancients themselves, I am no longer surpris'd to see Jupiter, Minerva, Neptune, Bacchus, appear upon the stage in the comedy of Aristophanes; and at the same time receiving incense in the temples of Athens. This is, in my opinion, the most reasonable account of a thing so obscure; and I am ready to give up my system to any other, by which the Athenians shall be made more consistent with themselves; those Athenians who sat laughing at the Gods of Aristophanes while they condemned Socrates for having appeared to despise the Gods of his country.

VI. A word is now to be spoken of the *Mimi*, which had some relation to comedy. This appellation was, by the Greeks and Romans, given to certain dramatic performances, and to the actors that played them. The denomination sufficiently shews, that their art consisted in imitation and buffoonery. Of their works, nothing, or very little, is remaining; so that they can only be considered by the help of some passages in authors; from which little is to be learned that deserves consideration. I shall extract the substance, as I did with respect to the Chorus, without losing time, by defining all the different species, or producing all the quotations which would give the reader more trouble than instruction. He that desires fuller instruction may read Vossius, Valois, Saumaïses, and Gataker, of whose compilations, however learned, I should think it shame to be the author.

The Mimi
and panto-
mimes.

The *Mimi* had their original from comedy, of which at its first appearance they made a part; for their mimick actors always played and exhibited grotesque dances in the comedies. The jealousy of rivalry afterwards broke them off from the comic actors, and made them a company by themselves. But to secure their reception, they borrowed from comedy all its drollery, wildness, grossness, and licentiousness. This amusement they added to their dances, and they produced what are now called farces, or burlettos. These farces had not the regularity or delicacy of comedies; they were only a succession of single scenes contrived to raise laughter; formed or unravelled without order and without connexion. They had no other end but to make the people laugh. Now and then there might be good sentences, like the sentences of P. Syrus, that are

yet left us: but the ground work was low comedy; and any thing of greater dignity drops in by chance. We must however imagine that this odd species of the drama rose at length to somewhat a higher character, since we are told that Plato the Philosopher laid the *Mimi* of Sophron under his pillow, and they were found there after his death. But in general we may say with truth, that it always discovered the meanness of its original, like a false pretension to nobility, in which the cheat is always discovered through the concealment of fictitious splendor.

These *Mimi* were of two sorts, of which the length was different, but the purposes the same. The *Mimi* of one species were short; those of the other longer, and not quite so grotesque. These two kinds were subdivided into many species, distinguished by the dresses and characters, such as shews drunkards, physicians, men, and women.

Thus far of the Greeks. The Romans having borrowed of them the more noble shews of tragedy and comedy were not content till they had their rhapsodies. They had their *planipedes*, who played with flat soles, that they might have the more agility; and their *sannions*, whose head was shaved, that they might box the better. There is no need of naming here all who had a name for these diversions among the Greeks and Romans. I have said enough, and perhaps too much of this abortion of comedy, which drew upon itself the contempt of good men, the censures of the magistrates, and the indignation of the fathers of the church*.

Another set of players were called pantomimes: these were at least so far preferable to the former, that they gave no offence to the ears. They spoke only to the eyes; but with such art of expression, that without the utterance of a single word, they represented, as we are told, a complete tragedy or comedy, in the same manner as dumb harlequin is exhibited on our theatres. These pantomimes among the Greeks first mingled singing with their dances; afterwards, about the time of Livius Andronicus, the songs were performed by one part, and the dances by another. Afterwards, in the time of Augustus, when they were sent for to Rome, for the diversions of the people, whom he had enslaved, they played comedies without songs or vocal utterance; but by the sprightliness,

* It is the licentiousness of the *Mimi* and *pantomimes*, against which the censure of the holy fathers particularly breaks out, as against a thing irregular and indecent, without supposing it much connected with the cause of religion.

activity, and efficacy of their gestures; or as Sidonius Apollinaris expresses it, *clausis faucibus, et loquente gestu*, they not only exhibited things and passions, but even the most delicate distinctions of passions, and the slightest circumstances of facts. We must not however imagine, at least in my opinion, that the pantomimes did literally represent regular tragedies or comedies by the mere motions of their bodies. We may justly determine, notwithstanding all their agility, their representations would at last be very incomplete: yet we may suppose, with good reason, that their action was very lively; and that the art of imitation went great lengths, since it raised the admiration of the wisest men, and made the people mad with eagerness. Yet when we read that one Hylus the pupil of one Pylades, in the time of Augustus, divided the applauses of the people with his master, when they represented Oedipus, or when Juvenal tells us that Bathillus played Leda, and other things of the same kind, it is not easy to believe that a single man, without speaking a word, could exhibit tragedies or comedies, and make starts and bounds supply the place of vocal articulation. Notwithstanding the obscurity of this whole matter, one may know what to admit as certain, or how far a representation could be carried by dance, posture, and grimace. Among these artificial dances, of which we know nothing but the names, there was as early as the times of Aristophanes some extremely indecent. These were continued in Italy from the time of Augustus, long after the emperors. It was a public mischief, which contributed in some measure to the decay and ruin of the Roman empire. To have a due detestation of these licentious entertainments, there is no need of any recourse to the fathers; the wiser Pagans tell us very plainly what they thought of them. I have made this mention of the mimi and pantomimes only to shew how the most noble of public spectacles were corrupted and abused, and to conduct the reader to the end through every road, and through all the bye-paths of human wit, from Homer and Eschylus to our own time:

VII. That we may conclude this work by applying the principles laid down at the beginning, and extend it through the whole, I desire the reader to recur to that point where I have represented the human mind as beginning the course of the drama. The Chorus was first a hymn to Bacchus, produced by accident; art brought it to perfection, and delight made it a public diversion. Thespes made a single actor play before the people; this was the beginning of theatrical shews. Eschylus, taking the idea of the Iliad and Odeſſy

Wandrings
of the human
mind in the
birth and
progress of
theatrical
representa-
tions.

Odeſſy, animated, if I may ſo expreſs it, the epic poem, and gave a dialogue in place of ſimple recitation, puts the whole into action, and ſets it before the eyes, as if it was a preſent and real tranſaction: he gives the Chorus * an intereſt in the ſcenes, contrives habits of dignity and theatrical decorations. In a word, he gives both to tragedy; or, more properly, draws it from the boſom of the epic poem. She made her appearance ſparkling with graces, and diſplayed ſuch majeſty as gained every heart at the firſt view. Sophocles conſiders her more nearly, with the eyes of a critic, and finds that ſhe has ſomething ſtill about her rough and ſwelling: he diveſts her of her falſe ornaments, teaches her a more regular walk, and more familiar dignity. Euripides was of opinion, that ſhe ought to receive ſtill more ſoftneſs and tenderneſs; he teaches her the new art of pleaſing by ſimplicity, and gives her the charms of graceful negligence; ſo that he makes her ſtand in ſuſpence, whether ſhe appears moſt to advantage in the dreſs of Sophocles ſparkling with gems, or in that of Euripides, which is more ſimple and modeſt. Both indeed are elegant; but the elegance is of different kinds, between which no judgment as yet has decided the prize of ſuperiority.

We can now trace it no farther; its progreſs amongſt the Greeks is out of ſight. We muſt paſs at once to the time of Auguſtus, where Apollo and the Muſes quitted their ancient reſidence in Greece, to fix their abode in Italy. But it is vain to aſk queſtions of Melpomene; ſhe is obſtinately ſilent, and we only know from ſtrangers her power amongſt the Romans. Seneca endeavours to make her ſpeak; but the gaudy ſhew with which he rather loads than adorns her, makes us think that he took ſome phantom of Melpomene for the muſe herſelf.

Another flight, equally rapid with that to Rome, muſt carry us through thouſands of years, from Rome to France. There in the time of Lewis XIV. we ſee the mind of man giving birth to tragedy a ſecond time, as if the Greek tragedy had been utterly forgot. In the place of Eſchylus, we have our Rotrou. In Corneille, we have another Sophocles, and in Racine a ſecond Euripides. Thus is tragedy raiſed from her aſhes, carried to the utmoſt point of greatness, and ſo dazzling that ſhe prefers herſelf to herſelf. Surprised

* Eſchylus, in my opinion, as well as the other poets his coteremporaries, retained the Chorus, not merely becauſe it was the faſhion, but becauſe examining tragedy to the bottom, they found it not

rational to conceive, that an action great and ſplendid, like the revolution of a ſtate, could paſs without witneſſes. See the ſecond diſcourſe, Vol. I.

to see herself produced again in France in so short a time, and nearly in the same manner as before in Greece, she is disposed to believe that her fate is to make a short transition from her birth to her perfection, like the Goddess that issued from the brain of Jupiter.

If we look back on the other side to the rise of comedy, we shall see it hatched by *Margites* from the *Odeſſy* of Homer, in imitation of her eldest ſiſter; but we ſee her under the conduct of Ariſtophanes become licentious and petulant, taking airs to herſelf which the magiſtrates were obliged to crush. Menander reduced her to bounds, taught her at once gaiety and politeneſs, and enabled her to correct vice, without ſhocking the offenders. Plautus, amongſt the Romans, to whom we muſt now paſs, united the earlier and the later comedy, and joined buffoonery with delicacy. Terence, who was better inſtructed, received comedy from Menander, and ſurpaſſed his original, as he endeavoured to copy it. And laſtly, Moliere produced a new ſpecies of comedy, which muſt be placed in a claſs by itſelf, in oppoſition to that of Ariſtophanes, whoſe manner is likewiſe peculiar to himſelf.

But ſuch is the weakneſs of the human mind, that when we review the ſucceſſions of the drama a third time, we find genius falling from its height, forgetting itſelf, and led aſtray by the love of novelty and the deſire of ſtriking out new paths. Tragedy degenerated in Greece from the time of Ariſtotle, and in Rome after Auguſtus. At Rome and Athens comedy produced *Mimi*, pantomimes, burlettas, tricks, and farces, for the ſake of variety; ſuch is the character, and ſuch the madneſs of the mind of man. It is ſatiſfied with having made great conqueſts, and gives them up to attempt others, which are far from anſwering its expectation, and only enables it to diſcover its own folly, weakneſs, and deviations. But why ſhould we be tired with ſtanding ſtill at the true point of perfection, when it is attained? If eloquence be wearied, and forgets herſelf a while, yet ſhe ſoon returns to her former point: ſo will it happen to our theatres if the French muſes will keep the Greek models in their view, and not look with diſdain upon a ſtage whoſe mother is nature, whoſe ſoul is paſſion, and whoſe art is ſimplicity: a ſtage, which, to ſpeak the truth, does not perhaps equal ours in ſplendor and elevation, but which excels it in ſimplicity and propriety, and equals it at leaſt in the conduct and direction of thoſe paſſions which may properly affect an honeſt man and a chriſtian.

For

For my part, I shall think myself well recompenced for my labour, and shall attain the end which I had in view, if I shall in some little measure revive in the minds of those who purpose to run the round of polite literature, not an immoderate and blind reverence, but a true taste of antiquity: such a taste as both feeds and polishes the mind, and enriches it by enabling it to appropriate the wealth of foreigners, and to exert its natural fertility in exquisite productions; such a taste as gave the Racine's, the Moliere's, the Boileau's, the Fontaine's, the Patru's, the Pelléssons, and many other great geniusses of the last age, all that they were, and all that they will always be; such a taste as puts the seal of immortality to those works in which it is discovered; a taste so necessary, that without it we may be certain that the greatest power of nature will long continue in a state below themselves; for no man ought to allow himself to be flattered or seduced by the example of some men of genius, who have rather appeared to despise this taste than to despise it in reality. It is true that excellent originals have given occasion without any fault of their own to very bad copies. No man ought severely to ape either the antients or the moderns: but if it was necessary to run into an extreme of one side or the other, which is never done by a judicious and well directed mind, it would be better for a wit, as for a painter, to enrich himself by what he can take from the ancients, than to grow poor by taking all from his own stock; or openly to affect an imitation of those moderns whose more fertile genius has produced beauties peculiar to themselves, and which themselves only can display with grace: beauties of that peculiar kind, that they are not fit to be imitated by others; though in those who first invented them they may be justly esteemed, and in them only.

DIS.

DISCOURSE

ON THE

CYCLOPS OF EURIPIDES,

AND

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATIONS of the Satyric Kind.

IT was not till the impression of this work was almost finished that I determined upon reflection to insert the Cyclops. No place luckily could have been so well suited to it as this, where it now appears like a side-dish after Aristophanes, otherwise it ought perhaps to be entirely omitted. After what I have written on this subject in some parts of the first volume, it would be to no purpose to attempt hiding from the reader the reasons that had induced me to say nothing of this piece. Although I did not intend to surprise those that are unacquainted with it, yet I must own that I could not be without some apprehension, lest a poem so repugnant to our modes of thinking, should at once efface from the minds of persons undetermined what value to set upon the ancient theatre, those impressions which that taste of beauty and nature so well expressed in their tragedies might have made. In short, I was afraid lest the grossness and barbarity of a Polyphemus should make them forget the tenderness of an Iphigenia, or the well-expressed passion of a Phædra: not that I thought it impossible for the same poet to produce two species of theatric writing of so different a nature, without forfeiting the esteem of the polite age of Athens. Even Moliere has found forgiveness for those farcical strokes which men of sense have sometimes observed in his writings. But that vast interval between the age of Euripides and our own, which I had with so much trouble, though perhaps unsuccessfully, endeavoured, without altering my authors, to shorten in tragedy, seemed to lengthen itself to an infinite degree, and become insurmountable in the Cyclops and the Satyric Drama. That

I do not pretend to say every thing Euripides and his cotemporaries have written deserves applause is, I think, sufficiently manifest from many passages in my work. If I had thought it right to adorn them a little in the French taste, by deviating from the originals, I should have been less straitened, and had possibly succeeded better; but I thought it incumbent on me to give an exact copy, not a distant imitation.

Writers, who like Boileau and Racine, speak in their own persons and to their own times, have very wisely contented themselves with borrowing the taste of antiquity and rejecting its manners. This is an art which those who would ensure applause must use, and which Euripides himself would practise if he was now living; for he would be a Racine, as Racine, had he lived in the ages of antiquity, would have been an Euripides. The writer who only means to give the history of the ancient theatre, ought neither to adorn or disfigure its poets, but should translate them faithfully. He may perhaps be allowed not to shock too violently the manners of the present times, and to insinuate to his reader, that it is with great difficulty the mind can, without becoming giddy, carry itself back so many thousand years. But in vain would you endeavour to convince the most sensible, that this is absolutely necessary; the leap is too violent. Let the reader be ever so resolved to suppose himself an Athenian; let him even believe that he is one, yet he cannot help forgetting the next moment his very resolution, and becoming a Frenchman full of the prejudices of modern times. Reason speaks, but prejudice acts; the one is a light offered to shew us the way, the other hurries us on with almost as much violence as instinct: this complaint is but too common; no one entirely places himself in the same situation as those he condemns. If these reflections are found true when applied to the ancient tragedies, where we must meet with so many beauties, *which every age must admire*, what consequence must be drawn from them in regard to a sort of poem hardly to be defined, and consisting of some passages which the fashions of the times gave beauty to, interspersed with many buffooneries intended for the amusement of the lowest dregs of a republican and licentious populace, will not prejudice, judging by what is really blameable in this poem, condemn what reason had before approved of?

These

These considerations had made me determine to omit the Cyclops; and I should have thought my duty to the public sufficiently discharged by ingenuously declaring, that in my opinion it was not worth translating into French. As I am not so warm a partizan of the ancients as to adore all their remains, the certain sign of a false taste, I thought myself intitled to lop off this poem as well as their other defects, without violating the esteem I have openly expressed for their true beauties. I believed this would be a sufficient proof of my impartiality, and do justice to Euripides without bringing any disgrace upon him. The translation of a poem not worthy of his genius, seemed an experiment of too ticklish a nature in an age like ours; to which the very design of my work appeared so bold an undertaking. But, in spite of these reflections, that rashness which first pushed me on to attempt the theatre of the Greeks made me determine not to leave the work unfinished, though I should even ruin the design with which I wrote it. The singularity of this poem, the only one of its kind remaining, and of which we cannot form any idea but from it, encouraged me to proceed boldly, without greatly fearing the prejudices of those who despise the ancients. The candid and impartial judge will easily discern truth from falsehood, good from bad, without condemning one work for the faults of another; or all indiscriminately, which the French vivacity is too often guilty of. Some middling comedies of Corneille, can never degrade him from that superiority which he deserves to possess among the judicious part of posterity.

After all, when I said that the Cyclops seemed to me unworthy of Euripides, I ought to explain what I meant by this expression, that I may not fall into Scylla, by endeavouring to shun Charybdis, and incur the censure of those who admire the Athenian theatre, by shewing too great a regard to the delicacy of those who despise, or those who are indifferent about it. I shall therefore explain myself; and, in order to do it with more exactness, must begin by defining the species this poem belongs to, by examining its essence, subject, origin, intention, relations it bears to the other dramas, its characters, inventors, and every thing that has any connection with it.

The name of this drama is derived from the satyrs, an order of rural deities, whose intervention was essential to it, not at all from satire, a species of poetry invented long after, and, according to Quintilian, by the Romans, with which it has no similitude, being entirely Grecian, and very seldom used by the Romans. The satyric drama is neither tragedy nor comedy, but between both.

It bears some relation to the first, from its manner of conducting the plan, the elevation of some of its characters, an air of the serious and pathetic interspersed, and the turn of some of its scenes: to the second, from the comic and often farcical strokes used in performing it; from its rapid and lively numbers, and from the catastrophe, which is always happy, in opposition to the tragic. Its intention was to soften the too violent passions excited by the tragic muse; the subject was generally Bacchus, either because it was performed amidst the tumultuous joy of the Bacchanalian feasts, or that they might not seem to neglect that God entirely, as tragedy did when it forgot its origin, and assumed a more majestic tone, which occasioned the saying: *What has all this to do with Bacchus.*

I shall not attempt to trace the obscure sources from whence it is derived: the name alone is a sufficient proof that it springs from the same root as those unformed tragedies and comedies which were performed by the peasants during the licentiousness of their feast-days. Horace makes them nearly of the same date when he says, “* The person who disputed for the goat in tragic verse, soon after exhibited to his spectators the naked and gross Satyrs.” Thus the † vintage, or ‡ the goat sacrificed, the village § songs, and the licentiousness of the peasants, near a-kin to that of the Satyrs, were the three sources from whence flowed the three dramatic species which amused Athens so long; the tragic, comic, and satyric, besides the mimi, a fourth, which I mentioned before. The learned Isaac Casaubon endeavours to trace them still nearer to their natural causes. Nature, says he, who is the mother of all arts, likewise produced feasts and holidays; the children of these were the dance, and an infinity of sayings full of wit, humour, and refined sense: from the dance came music; from those sayings, all the theatrical entertainments before mentioned. This is indeed going to the first principles; but as neither tragedy nor comedy were at all formed till nearly the time and in the manner I have before || explained, so the satyric drama did not receive its colouring till the same time and in the same manner in the age of Eschylus, and under his direction. Works whose plan is of so

* Carminē qui tragico vili certavit ob
hircum,
Mox etiam agrestes satyros nudavit.
† Τρυγῶνα. Vintage-song.

‡ Τρυγῶνα. Song of the goat.

§ Κωμῶνα. Village-song.

|| Volume I. Discourse II.

similar a nature, may be supposed the productions of the same artist. From the same principles are deduced the same consequences, the inventor of the dialogue is undoubtedly the inventor of all the dramatic entertainments known in his age: In fact, to judge from the Cyclops, (a speaking evidence which outweighs all conjecture, the only one of the sort remaining, even in the time of Eustatius, the celebrated commentator upon Homer, near five hundred years ago,) to judge, I say, from this curious relick, we shall find in the satyric drama the same regulated pace, assumed by tragedy and comedy after they were formed, the evolution of the plan, the same turn in the intrigue, the same kind of catastrophe, free from any episode or incidents which protracts the main action. On the other hand, as this poem does not contain above seven, hundred lines, we may conjecture from thence that those of the same sort were very short: we may therefore reasonably compare, them on account of their shortness, without any other proofs, to the farces which are at present acted in France, after the tragedies and comedies. We are likewise certain that every poet who contended for the prize, joined to the tragedy he composed on that occasion one of these pieces, which was acted after it, to moderate the passions it had raised. To finish the comparison between the two species, it must be observed, that the gravity of the satyric was very different from the majesty of the tragic; that it contained some sentences that wore an appearance of dignity, some studied speeches, and fine stories of morality, but nothing very empaffioned.

This extraordinary drama, except in the plan, deviates still farther from ancient comedy than it does from tragedy, as it neither produces on the stage, like Aristophanes, the government or private citizen of Athens. The peculiar turn of wit and humour, whether true or false, appropriated to each species, was accurately marked out in the dramatic writings of the ancients.

The pleasantry of the mimetic was very different from that of the comic; and what prevailed in the satyric drama, from both. A profound knowledge of the human mind, and of the food required to give it pleasure, had occasioned surprising divisions in this subject: each of these divisions formed a distinct class of entertainments, none presuming to anticipate what belonged to the province of another; very different in this respect from the rashness of the moderns, who have often endeavoured to unite in one motely piece, what nature has separated, tragedy, comedy, and opera; a vain attempt

to excite, by new and high sauces, the appetite of a cloyed spectator, tired with the beauties of nature. This is what has occasioned great difficulty to the poets: a difficulty perceived even in the time of Phædrus, whose fable on that subject I have already before translated, in the time of Fontaine, who has applied it in so agreeable a manner to the critics of his age, nay, even in the time of Eschylus himself. It is however certain, that notwithstanding the poets of every age are enslaved by the prevailing taste, or rather caprice, they have it still in their power to shake off their chains, and return to the true and natural taste, which, to give a real and lasting pleasure, requires us not to jumble together works of distinct natures, confines the exertion of genius to the limits of probability, will not allow us to exhibit a romance by way of tragedy, prescribes fixed rules to us in the comic or any other species of writing intended for the amusement, or to excite the passions of the spectator, whom we should always suppose capable of reason. This the ancients were very sensible of; and if we censure them with justice for too many subdivisions in the species of theatric representations, we ought at least to allow them the merit of having preserved in each class, that particular characteristic which distinguished it, in imitation of nature, who has formed every being with essential and peculiar qualities, and a specific perfection. This rule was observed by the Athenians in the satyric drama, which they cultivated with almost the same industry as those of a higher order, though only intended as a recreation after them. It became then a particular class of entertainment; but was it of a durable nature? Reason and fact immediately answer, No. For before I proceed to shew the change it has undergone, I must confess that its noble and refined sentiments are degraded by a mixture of buffoonery; that it contains some strokes of farcical wit designed to divert the *buyers of nuts*, as Horace calls them; and that, to conceal nothing from the reader, it was the bad taste, desire of variety, and caprice of the spectators that gave rise to it; they grew tired of tragedy, which touched their hearts, and even of the laughter of comedy. Hence arose a desire of something very marvellous, capricious, and new, as frequently happens in modern times: but the poets, in humouring this madness, acted in a different manner from what has been often attempted in France. Instead of confounding themselves, by endeavouring to introduce new ideas, they only revived the ancient: they called to mind the satyrs who had entertained the spectator in the first daw nings of unformed tragedy, added some ornaments

sui ted to the reigning fashions, and formed them upon the model of regulated tragedy, from which they had been excluded when it received a nobler plan. Thus the satyrs, becoming more polished than in former times, assumed something of the tragic air, to amuse with as much regularity, though not in so serious a manner. This is confirmed by Horace, when he says, "It was necessary " to recall the spectator, by an agreeable novelty." And the Romans, who introduced the Atellani, in which the satyrs had no part, instead of the satyric drama of the Greeks, invented these farces, (according to the old scholiast of Juvenal,) to mitigate the effects of the mournful gravity of tragedy. From these reasons we may conclude, that this poem could not hope to last like tragedy and comedy, either from its nature or intention. This capricious species, like the Mimi, were but dramatic embryos, which have met with the same fate as the other productions of false taste, been forgot, and afterwards exhibited as new inventions, but will never please long. The satyric drama, however despicable it may appear at first view, yet deserves some respect, by having given birth, from a nice and almost imperceptible change, to a dramatic poem of undoubted merit. I mean the pastoral. To the gross and indecent satyrs succeeded at last the polite and graceful shepherd: the Idyllium was represented by action; and the poet chose a middle path between tragedy and comedy, forming an imitation of both, without belonging to either; though perhaps it may be justly classed in the comic species. If I am not mistaken, it is to modern Italy we are indebted for this ingenious invention; and I make no doubt that the model was taken from the satyric drama, as well as from pastoral poetry. The transition from the satyrs to the shepherds is very natural. The Satyrs and Silenus, characters whose difference consisted in their age, or some other whim of the poets, composed the satyric Chorus. They gave name to the drama, and constituted its essence. They were a class of fabulous deities created by the pencil of the painter and imagination of the poet. I can hardly think the ancients ever regarded them in a serious light as real Gods, since they were only brought on the stage to be laughed at. The description they give of their relation to Bacchus, whose followers these Demi-Gods were, is quite allegorical; and allegory was often employed by antiquity to represent things as real and divine existencies, merely to make a stronger impression on the minds of the people, without any intention, that they should believe what was so represented real and divine. It is plain from the

Cy-

Cyclops, that Silenus and the Satyrs were used as buffoons to divert the populace. Their petulant, cynical, and cowardly character, seems only calculated to make them ridiculous: a lasting monument left us by the poets of their own folly, still more of their spectators; yet these very people were supposed to possess a profound knowledge in the abstruse sciences. Virgil's drunken * Silenus sings in a very sublime strain; and † Cicero makes him, when surprised and bound by Midas, utter oracles; even ‡ Plato himself compares Socrates to one of those figures of Silenus, made by the statuaries and painters, which when drawn aside, or taken to pieces, discovered in the inside, or behind them, representations of the loves and graces, to indicate that we ought never to stop at the outward shell, but carry our researches farther; that the most profound wisdom was often covered by a deformed mask, and the most refined sense veiled in a cloud of buffoonery. These facts, and many others which I forbear to mention, make it allowable to conjecture that the satyric poems concealed a better meaning than what appeared at first view; nor will this conjecture be without foundation, since if we may believe § Donatus, "The satyric drama lashed the vices of particular people with great strength and severity, though it did not mention any one by name." And || Philoxenus suffered very severely for having represented in a poem of this sort the character of the tyrant by the Cyclops, his favourite mistress by Galatea, and himself by Ulysses. The Satyrs were in fact of a

* Eclog. 6.

† Tuscul. 1.

‡ In his Symposium.

§ Prolegomen. Terent.

|| This Philoxenus was born at Cythera, a Dithyrambic poet, and a professed parasite, and had been a slave. Dionysius the tyrant sent him to the quarries, upon suspicion that he had been intimate with a woman who played on the flute, and was kept by the king. In this place Philoxenus composed his Cyclops. He was a complete debauchee and drunkard. Athenius has recorded many good stories and bon-mots of his, several of which have been verified in the *Ana*, particularly one of his saying, when he had almost killed himself with eating.

"M'y voilà tout résolu.

"Et puis qu'il faut que je meure,

"Sans faire tant de façon

"Qu'on m'apporte tout à l'heure

"Le reste de mon poisson."

La Font. après le vieux Comique Machon.

There is another story told of him, that being one day at table with Dionysius the tyrant, and observing that they had brought him a very small fish, but set before the king one of a prodigious size, he took up the small one that was upon his own plate and clapt it to his ear. Being asked what he meant by this mummery, "I had a mind, said he, to be informed about some things that happened in the time of Neirus; but this youngster, who has been but a short time in the sea, could not give me any answer; yours is older, and could, without doubt tell me what I want to know."

very

very railing disposition. The Romans employed them in their triumphs, to gall the persons, who triumphed with severe and stinging raileries, which the gaiety of a public festival did not allow them to resent.

If, notwithstanding these examples and authorities, it will be difficult to prove that allegory was the soul which enlivened the satyric drama; yet we may venture to affirm, that it was often used to give it poignancy and beauty, as well as parody. Cratinus composed a parody of Homer's *Odyssey*; but it is not certain whether this was a drama of the satyric kind, or a regular comedy, like the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. If it could be proved that allegory or parody formed the basis of these poems, though full of buffooneries, we should not condemn them as absolutely bad; but, to speak truth, there is nothing that can lead us to this opinion in the *Cyclops*, though it contains some delicate allusions; but these are only casual strokes, and do not persuade us that its foundation is allegorical, and I must own that I see nothing in it that bears any resemblance to the comedies of Aristophanes. These are certainly allegorical; as such they deserve our esteem, though we are justly offended at their grossness and obscenity; but no authors either ancient or modern that I have looked into, has attempted to discover in the satyric drama in general, or the *Cyclops* in particular, this allegory or parody which I was so desirous of finding there. If then it has not this seasoning to heighten it, let us ingenuously own that the want of it makes this species of dramatic writing greatly inferior to the ancient comedy: for if under the cover of what is seemingly mean and contemptible, some better meaning is not concealed, this cover will be really contemptible when it does not conceal any thing, but is the foundation and substance of the work. Let me add, that if buffoonery, though used as a veil to some more refined sense, are, after all, but buffooneries, what shall we say when nothing more refined is hid under them and their obvious, is their real meaning. I am afraid this was the case in the satyric drama; and that the poets intended no refinement but to amuse the populace by extravagance, novelty, and buffoonery? We may therefore boldly affirm, that the *Cyclops* does not deserve to be the production of a poet who has left us so many fine works; and, if we form our judgment from it, that the other poems of the same sort were equally unworthy of their authors.

Thespis, a cotemporary of Solon, who lived in the sixtieth olympiad, was, according to appearances, the first who introduced the

Satyrs into his waggon. Horace seems to describe him, though he does not mention his name. Suidas, however, insists that it was Pratinas, the same who disputed the prize with Eschylus and Chærylus. If the piece in question be a dramatic dialogue, the invention of it can be attributed to none but Eschylus, as I have endeavoured to prove. The learned reckon five of these satyric pieces, all written by this father of the drama, of which the *Proteus* was one. Seven or eight are given to Sophocles, four to Aeschylus, which were in some estimation. Euripides is said to have written five. Xenocles, Philocles, Morsimus, poets mentioned by Aristophanes, composed pieces of this kind; as did likewise Astydamas the younger, Iophon, and even Plato the philosopher, who burnt them as well as his tragedies, without suffering them to be exhibited on the theatre. These are most of the best writers who have been cited, but all their poems are not; and it is not to be doubted but that they wrote many more besides those of which the titles have been preserved. In general it may be asserted, that every tragic poet was a satyric poet likewise, since the little piece was almost always added to the tragic *Trilogies*, to make the complete *Tetralogies*. Of all these only one is come down to us entire, which is the *Cyclops*, and is most certainly the composition of Euripides. The sentences with which it abounds, the philosophic air, the turn of expression, so like that which we find in his other pieces, leave us no room to doubt it, although we had not the concurring testimony of manuscripts, and of Atheneus.

The scene is adapted to this kind of drama; it represents a rock, a cave, pasture grounds, and flocks of sheep; Satyrs covered with the skins of goats: the action itself half serious half burlesque, and the event happy. The subjects historical, as those of tragedies; in a word, every thing here is peculiar to the satyric drama, such as I have described it: but it is necessary to give some account of the scene, of which I have said but little hitherto. We are told by Vitruvius, * that there were three sorts of scenes. The tragic scene was decorated with pillars, raised pediments, statues; and with such ornaments as are seen in the palaces of kings. The comic scenes represented the houses of private persons, with their balconies, and the streets in perspective. The satyric scene had woods, grottos, mountains, and rural ornaments. Here were seen Satyrs old and young, the different ages of the Silenes were distinguished by grotesque masks, with beards like those of goats. The Satyrs were negligently

* Vitruvius. b. 5. ch. 28.

DISCOURSE ON THE CYCLOPS OF EURIPIDES.

451

covered with the skins of beasts: the Silenes were adorned with flowers artfully interwoven. Both were sometimes represented by pantomimes, mounted upon stilts, the better to imitate their legs, which were like those of goats. The principal part of the representation consisted, as all the others, in verses, singing, and dancing; but in the satyric drama this was more sprightly, especially the dancing, which Satyrs have always been fond of. The dance peculiar to them was called *Sicinnis*, either because Sicinnus was the inventor of it, or from a word * which signifies *movement*; and therefore it was extremely gay, and doubtless like the music, a little ruckick, without any thing noble or pathetic; like the airs in their tragedies. This is all that can be said of the satyric drama.

Romans.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

Polixenus, the Cyclops; Silenus; Chorus of Satyrs; Cyclops; and a Chorus of Men.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

A Polixenus, how much I still suffer, and have suffered, on your account, from my earliest years, I shall tell you. I was born in the city of the Cyclops, and have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops. I have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops. I have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops.

THE SECOND SCENE.

M Polixenus, how much I still suffer, and have suffered, on your account, from my earliest years, I shall tell you. I was born in the city of the Cyclops, and have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops. I have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops. I have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops.

M Polixenus, how much I still suffer, and have suffered, on your account, from my earliest years, I shall tell you. I was born in the city of the Cyclops, and have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops. I have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops. I have suffered much from the war of the Cyclops, and the war of the Cyclops.

THE
CYCLOPS
OF
EURIPIDES.

PERSONS of the DRAMA.

Polyphemus, the Cyclops; Silenus; Chorus of Satyrs; Ulysses.

Scene near a Cavern of Mount Ætna.

ACT the FIRST.

SCENE the FIRST.

SILENUS, *alone.*

ALAS! Bacchus, how much I still suffer, and have suffered on your account from my earliest youth! shall I recal the time, when agitated by furies sent by the *jealous Juno, you quitted the mountain-nymphs, who had brought you up? shall I recal our dangers in the war of the giants? Glorious remembrance! You know, Silenus fought at your side! I signalized my valour, by piercing with my lance Enceladus, in spite of his enormous buckler†. (*to the audience*) Whence this surprize! am I asleep? surely no, I myself will shew to Bacchus the spoils I then obtained. But let

* On account of Semele, one of Jove's mistresses, and mother of Bacchus. both Silenus and the satyrs were the greatest poltroons of antient fable.

† The ridicule of this passage is, that

me forget my past misfortunes; what were they in comparison of my present distress? your last adventure has ruined me. Juno, to remove you for ever from her sight, caused you to be carried away by * Tyrrhenian pirates. I sailed after you with my sons the Satyrs. Seated at the helm I encourage them: the sea grows white under their oars: we sought for Bacchus, but in vain; for not far from the promontory of Malea, a contrary wind drove us upon this rock of Ætna, the melancholy asylum of the hideous children of Neptune; of those one-eyed monsters who thirst for human blood; of those dismal inhabitants of dark caverns; and in a word, of the cruel Cyclops. One of these surprised and enslaved us. The barbarous Polyphemus is now our master. What change of fortune! We feed his flocks, after having served the amiable Bacchus. My sons, who are still young, take care of the tender lambs, while my employment, more suited to my years, is to fill the vessels with milk, to keep the cavern clean, and wait on my detested lord at his abominable banquets. But I perceive my sons, who return dancing before their flocks. Holla! why these airy trippings? do you think you now hear the sound of such instruments as when you accompanied Bacchus to the festivals of Althea?

By this, which is half serious and half comic, the reader may observe what was the taste of the satyric prologue; which in this manner might often parody the inflated style of the tragic composition.

S C E N E the S E C O N D.

S I L E N U S. C H O R U S O F S A T Y R S.

The Chorus enter on the stage with tumultuary dancing. This band of goat-footed men, as Ronsard affects to call them, was well calculated to make the populace laugh, who delighted in monstrous representations, fetched from their fabulous ideas. But how can this part of the Chorus be translated by us? They are shepherds who apostrophize their flocks in beautiful verse, after the manner of Theocritus: but everything considered, these are only the addresses of shepherds to the brute creation; they can indeed boast of nature and simplicity, such as Euripides has expressed in the tragedy of Io, when that young prince threatens to transfix the birds with his arrows: but this antique taste is so opposite to that of my country-

* See the fable in the third book of Ovid's Metamorphoses.

men,

men, that any attempt of mine to translate them, would equally expose me to the censure of the lovers, and the foes of antiquity. The reader, however, shall be presented with one specimen, not much altered from the original; by which he will perceive that the verses, notwithstanding their elegance, discover an unseasonable rusticity.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Imprudent leader of a chosen flock, where dost thou wander amid these shaggy rocks? there no gentle zephyr blows, no tender herb springs, no limpid water flows to quench thy thirst; thou wilt not hear the bleating of the lambs: but all these are here; come down and taste. If thou dost not abandon that eminence, I will enter quickly into the den of the Cyclops.

ANTISTROPHE.

Approach, ye ewes, your lambs call you; will ye suffer them to languish? will you quit these green pastures, and return to the caves of Mount Ætna? I am more unhappy than you! The amiable Bacchus is not here. Here are no dance, no Bacchanals, no jocund shouts; the soft sound of Bacchic drum strike not our ravished ears, as we swallow the enchanting juice of the grape. There are no more any nymphs or orgies on Mount Nyssa for us.

EPODE.

In vain do I sing these airs in praise of our favourite Deity; and vainly do I seek after our past festivals and vanished pleasures. Where art thou, dear Divinity? In vain does my imagination represent thy long white hair scattered and floating in the wind: thy faithful servant is become slave to a Cyclops. What bondage! this goat skin with which I am covered, makes me in vain sigh after liberty, and thy company, which I have lost for ever.

This prepares for the unravelling of the piece; and this art, which the ancients observed in their slightest poems, merits our attention.

SCENE the THIRD.

SILENUS, *interrupting the Satyrs.*

Be silent my sons! give orders for the penning up your flocks, *(The Satyrs had collected them together.)*

CHORUS *to the servants.*

Obeys ye slaves! but why, my father, this haste?

SILE-

SILENUS.

Peace, I say, I perceive a vessel on the beach. I see the rowers and their chief, who draw nigh this grot. They bear in their arms vases and empty urns. Famine doubtless has obliged them to land on this inhospitable shore. Hapless strangers, how I pity you! Alas! little do they know the lords of this island, since they thus imprudently throw themselves into the arms of a host who feeds on human flesh. But be silent, and let us learn from themselves the cause of their arrival in Sicily.

SCENE the FOURTH.

Enter ULYSSES and his companions.

Ulysses thus addresses the Satyrs: "Will ye inform me where we can get any water to quench our burning thirst; and if there are any inhabitants here, who will sell refreshment to the weary seamen?"

Ulysses, when he thus spoke, had not perceived the figure of those whom he addressed; but observing their feet and cloathing, "What do I see! cried he: we have come to a city consecrated to Bacchus; for if my eyes deceive me not these are Satyrs. Deign, old man, first to receive the honours to which your rank and years intitle you." (*He salutes Silenus.*)

Silenus returns the salute, and enquires after his name and country. This dialogue is carried on in single verses. Ulysses tells him his name, and that of his kingdom. "I know, returned Silenus, that eloquent, that crafty descendant of Sisyphus." Here Ulysses finding himself discovered, and apprehensive lest Silenus should describe him more at length, interrupts the old man. "Stop, says he, I am Ulysses: say no more." Silenus continues to question him farther, in the Greek taste. "Whence comes he? from the siege of Troy. Did he not know the way back to Ithaca? Yes, but a tempest had drove him from his course. Alas! replied the old man, you and I suffer from the same unhappy fate."

This exciting the curiosity of Ulysses, that hero questions Silenus in his turn, who owns, that his wretched destiny had brought him to Mount Ætna, while he was searching the seas for Bacchus, whom pyrates had carried off: that this region of Sicily knew neither

neither towns nor human inhabitants: that the Cyclops ruled over it; monsters, ignorant of civil life, and all the endearing softness of society: monsters who lead a wandering life, and pay obedience to neither sovereign nor laws. (*Such are the savages of the present times.*) That they feed flocks by profession? and not using the gifts of Ceres, they live on milk, cheese, and the flesh of their herds; and above all, that they were wholly unacquainted with the enchanting liquor of Bacchus, which their unfriendly fun was incapable of producing.

U L Y S S E S.

At least they know the sacred rites of hospitality.

S I L E N U S.

Certainly, for they say, that strangers afford them delicious banquets.

U L Y S S E S.

What mean you! do they feed on human flesh?

S I L E N U S.

All who land here are immediately devoured.

U L Y S S E S.

Where is this Cyclops? is he not in his cavern?

S I L E N U S.

No, he is tending his flocks on the declivity of a mountain.

U L Y S S E S.

What can you devise to send us speedily out of this cursed country?

S I L E N U S.

I know of no device; but what I can, I will do for you.

Here Ulysses takes him at his word, and intreats him to sell him some provisions, which the other excuses himself from doing; as having nothing but milk, cheese, and the flesh of animals: but Ulysses, telling him that he will be contented with these, importunes him immediately to sell him some. Silenus asks gold, and Ulysses offers him wine, which the Satyrs set a much higher value on. This wine was of the most exquisite growth, wine given him by Maron, the son of Evanthus, the grandson of Bacchus, and pupil of Silenus

nus himself, who, upon hearing his name, bursts into tears of joy. This wine was produced in a fertile region of Thrace. Silenus, who had not for a long time tasted this precious liquor, uses many comical intreaties to Ulysses for a sight of it, who, shewing him a skin of it, makes him clap it to his mouth. The old man then appears in his true light, a professed drunkard, displaying all the odd grimaces of intoxication; for these make a considerable part of the satyric drama. The smell of it he calls beautiful, which makes Ulysses reply, "Have you seen it then?" Silenus drinks, and skips about with joy, because the wine, as he expresses it, has reached the ends of his very nails.

Besides this wine, Ulysses also makes him a promise of money. "Your servant, as to cash, answers Silenus, give me wine, give me wine." "Be it so, replies the king of Thrace; but then deliver the lambs and cheeses."

SILENUS, *aside, at a little distance.*

Yes, he shall have them. What care I for the interest of my masters. I would willingly give both them and their flocks into the bargain, for a single draught of this divine juice. Yes, it is a happiness I wish for, to precipitate them and myself after them from the summit of that precipice. Fool that he is, who does not place his sole felicity in Bacchus: he alone makes us forget our miseries. Let us drink, care for this bottle, and let the Cyclops weep. (*To Ulysses.*) Hark ye Ulysses, one moment's conversation with you?

ULYSSES.

With all my heart, you talk to a friend.

SILENUS, *somewhat thoughtful.*

Have you then conquered Troy, and brought back Helen?

ULYSSES.

We have totally destroyed the house of Priam, &c.

The greatest part of what follows in this dialogue is indeed worthy of a drunkard and a buffoon, and fit to make the populace laugh; for Silenus carries his questions to an indecent length, probably stammering and staggering in the manner of the disciples of Bacchus. After eight or ten verses, observing the servants whom he had sent to fetch the stores, "Take, Ulysses, here are the lambs, the cheese, and milk, you stand in need of; haste, fly

"with them on board, but leave me wine in exchange for
"them."

ULYSSES *perceiving the Cyclops at a distance.*

Oh Gods! we are ruined. See Polyphemus: what can we do?
whither shall we fly?

SILENUS.

Steal speedily into the cavern; that will conceal you.

ULYSSES.

Excellent concealment, to throw one's self into the very jaws of
danger!

SILENUS.

Ye may yet escape; there are other subterfuges.

ULYSSES, *aside.*

It must not be! Troy would have reason to reproach us should
we fly from a single mortal: with this buckler I have faced a thousand
Phrygians; and shall I now turn dastard? If I must die, let me die
like a hero: no, rather let me live to justify what impartial fame
says of me.

SILENUS, *drunk.*

Come, come, take and give. Why, what's the matter? whence
all this perplexity?

A C T the S E C O N D.

S C E N E the F I R S T.

Enter the CYCLOPS.

AS the satyric drama consisted in theatrical tricks and buf-
foonery, more than in words, the reader will perceive that
the drunkenness of Silenus and the Satyrs must have lasted a long
time, and afforded no small fund of laughter and merriment to the
lower class of spectators. The Cyclops is astonished, at his entry,
to hear the din of Bacchanals, and to see that both Silenus and his
sons were those who caused this intemperate clamour.

"Whence is it, cried he, with a dreadful voice; whence, I say,
"this Bacchanalian uproar? and yet here are neither Bacchus, nor
"his drums and masks, with nodding plumes. Answer me. How
"came

"came these young ones into my cavern? do their mother give
 "them suck there, or are they frisking around? where are the
 "cane-vessels? is there plenty of cheese? Ha! what say ye? Hola!
 "what answer do ye make? this club shall make some of ye weep.
 "(Here he lifts his club and threatens them) So so, lift up your
 "eyes and hearken. (He takes Silenus by the chin, who holds
 "down his head like a valet in a farce.)

SILENUS, *with a comical simplicity.*

See, my eyes are raised to Jupiter: I see the stars.

CYCLOPS.

Is my dinner ready?

SILENUS.

Yes, make ready your stomach.

CYCLOPS.

Are the vessels filled with milk?

SILENUS.

So full that you may drink as they run over.

CYCLOPS.

With goats, or cows, or mixed milk?

SILENUS.

Any milk you please, provided you do not gulp me down at a
 swallow.

It is not easy to represent the reader with the farcical lowness of
 this scene. In this manner the froth of tragic spirit intoxicates the
 common people. And since the old comedies are still tolerated,
 Euripides, must be pardoned these buffoon extravagances. With
 this apology, I proceed.

The Cyclops answers the pleasantry of Silenus, with another at-
 tempt at wit. "Should I swallow up a Satyr, replied he, I should
 "fear being poisoned, or getting the cholic." On crossing the stage
 in the true strut of a giant, he perceives Ulysses and his com-
 panions.

"Ho ho, says he, what is this? what band of men do I see
 "near my cavern? They look like rogues and subtle pirates, who

N n n 2

"have

" have not come here for nothing. They are, for see my lambs
 " tied together with twigs of osier, vessels filled with coagulated
 " milk, and Silenus himself full of wounds and bruises."

Silenus catches at these words, and makes use of them to bring himself out of the scrape.

S I L E N U S.

Yes, yes, I am in a fever with blows.

C Y C L O P S.

Who beat you ? who dared to do it ?

S I L E N U S.

These thieves here, because I attempted to prevent them from plundering.

C Y C L O P S.

Humph ! say you so ! they know not then that I am a God, and of race immortal. [*Alluding to the Athenian gentry, who used to beat the peasants.*]

S I L E N U S.

I told them so, but they laughed at me. They have bolted down, in spite of all my endeavours, whole cheeses, and were about to carry off these lambs. As for you, master, they promised to tie you to a tree ; to squeeze out your guts at your single eye : to regale you with a hearty bastinading ; to carry you, tied neck and heels, on board their ship ; and to sell you to the first bidder for a stone-carrier, or a porter. Such, master, were the threats of those very honest gentlemen.

C Y C L O P S.

Mighty well. Fly, sharpen my knives, kindle a fire, that I may instantly sacrifice them to my vengeance, and appease with their flesh, which shall be boiled and roasted, my craving appetite, which now nauseates the common food the chase affords. I have devoured lions and stags to satiety ; and it is now a long while since I tasted the more delicious flesh of men.

This part of the poem resembles the stories of giants and furies, contrived to amuse, or rather to infect the minds of children, by inspiring them with ridiculous terrors, and a false taste. This scene should have reconciled Mr. Perrault to Euripides, as it may be compared with the woman who had a pudding-nose.

SILENUS.

Right, my lord, variety creates a stomach; and in truth it is now long since you have feasted upon a stranger.

ULYSSES, *to Polyphemus.*

Deign to hear us in our turn: we came here from our ship in order to buy provisions; and Silenus actually sold us these lambs for a goblet of wine. He drank, and we received them; both parties were pleased, because no violence was used by either. This is the real state of affairs. But this old man, upon finding his villany detected, invented this story to get himself handsomely off.

SILENUS.

I invent! how can you---

ULYSSES.

Yes, I speak nothing but the truth.

SILENUS.

He lies. I swear by Neptune, the dread father of my lord Polyphemus, by the greatest of the Tritons, by Nereus, by Calypso, by all the ***, and by all the fish of the sea*. O most beautiful of the Gods! amiable Cyclops, my dearest master, I have not, assure yourself, sold your chattles. May my sons, whom I tenderly love, may they, I say, die miserable, if what I tell you is not the naked truth.

This is apparently a parody on Homer. The Chorus, however act the honourable part, which Horace assigns it; and the best of it is, that the Chorus give testimony against their father. For thus the Satyrs address Silenus.

CHORUS.

Hark ye, Silenus, hold your lying tongue: we saw you sell them all with our own eyes. If we speak not the truth, perish our fire, who stands there present.

CYCLOPS, *to the Satyrs and Ulysses.*

You are all combined to defraud me. I believe in Silenus more

* This ridiculous string of oaths shews what Euripides thought of the fabulous Divinities, and is a justification of what Aristophanes has thrown out against him upon this account.

than in Rhadamanthus and in you. He is more righteous than that judge of hell.

In this place Euripides probably meant to represent those masters, who having once bestowed their confidence on wretches, are the eternal dupes of their own credulity, so as not to be able to feel the truth of things, even though they touch it with their finger-ends. This contains a good allegory, but cannot justify the low humour of the scene. Polyphemus thus proceeds.

C Y C L O P S.

Let us ourselves interrogate these strangers. Whence come ye, a'nt please ye? Whence are ye? What city gave you birth?

U L Y S S E S.

We are of Ithaca, and come from facking Troy. Contrary winds drove us on your coasts.

C Y C L O P S.

Are you one of those Greeks who pursued to the banks of the Scamander that fury Helena?

U L Y S S E S.

Yes, my lord; and she cost us much trouble to recover.

C Y C L O P S.

You might have saved yourselves these troubles, and staid at home. Rare enterprize, to make war on the Phrygians for carrying off a woman!

Euripides has always spoken the same language with respect to Helena, in his Iphigenia in Aulis, in his Orestes, and other parts of his works. In this he agrees with Herodotus; for that father of history, in the begining of Clio, makes no scruple of blaming his countrymen, at least giving us to understand, that the people of Asia had reason to hate them, for carrying fire and sword into their country, for a woman who had lost all sense of shame.

U L Y S S E S.

So the Gods had determined. We mortals are not to be condemned for it. As for us, O illustrious son of Ocean's God, deign to look upon us as suppliants. We dare intreat you with that freedom which conscious innocence and virtue inspire, not to contaminate yourself with an impious festival: O betray not the Greeks, who,

who, out of friendship, have approached you, and erected temples in honour of the God your father. With these all Greece abounds, and in particular the port of Tænarus*; that inviolable asylum is particularly consecrated to his worship. The heights of Malea, the rich rock of Sunium, and retreats of Gæreste, belong to Neptune. If we made war on the Phrygians, we thought it our duty to wash out in their blood those stains with which they had dishonoured Greece. Take yourself a share in our glory. Yes, you are a Greek, and inhabit this burning mountain which † belongs to us. Permit us to treat with you as a man. Receive suppliants, who are almost spent with having wandered on so many seas; give them the presents due to sacred hospitality, cloaths and victuals: at least, receive them not in a barbarous manner; nor prepare that horrible feast with which you threaten us. Too many Greeks have already perished before Troy. Too many tears has the Phrygian sword caused wives to shed for the death of their husbands, mothers for that of their beloved sons, and antient fathers for the loss of their only support. What asylum shall they henceforth find, if you consume by fire and sword, at an abominable banquet, these melancholy remains whom Mars has spared? Follow more mild determinations. Repress that avidity unworthy of you, prefer humanity to barbarism, and consider that illicit desires often destroy those who abandon themselves to them. (*An artful preparation for the catastrophe.*)

Thus, in the satyric drama, were the sublime and pathetic blended with the low and farcical: and this inconceivable mixture constitutes the equivocal characteristic of this species of composition.

* Tænarus, a cape of the Peloponnesus, which separates the gulf of Messina from that of Laconia, and 84 miles distant from Malea, another promontory of the Peloponnesus. It was famous for two horrid caves, where they feign that Hercules destroyed the dog Cerberus. Pausanias gives us the following particulars with regard to Sunium in his Atticus. "In that part of the continent of Greece which faces the Cyclades and the Ægean sea, Sunium, an Athenian cape, projects into the sea: at the foot of it is a haven, and at the top

"a temple dedicated to Minerva. From thence is a short passage to Laurion, where the Athenians worked mines of silver." Thucydides, Plutarch, and Euripides, also mention those mines. Gæresti is a promontory of Eubœa.

† From this passage it appears, that Mount Ætna threw out flames in the time of Euripides. The Cyclops to be sure was no Greek, as the Grecians sent no colony to Sicily till after the Trojan war. This, however, is a common anticipation in poetry.

THE CYCLOPS.

SILENUS, to *Polyphemus*.

Believe me in my turn, my lord, and swallow that eloquent orator: devour every inch of him, especially his tongue; for by that morsel you will surpass all your brother Cyclops in every art of harrangue.

The CYCLOPS, to Ulysses.

Wretched mortal, know that Plutus is the only God of the wise: all beside is pure chimeras and allusion. Of what avail to me are the promontories dedicated to my father? do not thou hope to soften me by this impertinent enumeration: I dread not the fiery bolts of Jove, being persuaded that his Godship is not more powerful than I. Henceforth I will condemn him.

Here polytheism is carried to its utmost impiety; for he tells Ulysses, by way of reasons for his contempt, that his cave screens him from all the storms of Jupiter; and being therein defended from the rains, which he laughs at, he devotes his hours to good living: that the skins of his goats, and his hearth, defended him from the snow and the insults of the north: that the earth supplied his flocks with pasture; that he never sacrificed to any but his belly, that greatest of the deities: that the Jove of the wise is to eat, drink, and live without care: and that he despises both laws and lawgivers. Like the valets of Aristophanes, he expresses himself in low, burlesque, indecent terms, with regard to thunder. In a word, his impious rhodomontade knows no bounds, which never could have been tolerated on the stage of Athens, not even from the mouth of a Cyclops, with impunity, if custom, as I have said, had not given the poets full authority over the fabulous religion, which greatly differed from the real.

The Cyclops ends his discourse, by offering to his guests, as a gift of hospitality, by way of derision, the bason which he inherited from his ancestors, wherein he intended to boil them, with the fuel for that purpose.

CYCLOPS.

Come in, come in, ye caitiff wretches! approach my table, and let me banquet on you, in a manner becoming Polyphemus.

ULYSSES.

Alas! in vain have I avoided the dangers of the Trojan war, and all the perils of the sea, if I am now to fall a sacrifice to an impious

pious heart more hard than a rock! Divine Minerva, now do I implore thy tutelary aid, to rescue me from a greater danger than I have yet encountered. And thou that inhabitest the heavenly Olympus, cast one look on those tokens of hospitality now offered us. If thou disregardest this execrable impiety, in vain do we honour thee as a Deity. (*They all enter the Cavern.*)

SCENE the SECOND.

FIRST DEMI-CHORUS.

Go, insatiable and devouring monster, go and appease your cruel hunger. A worthy banquet waits you; mangle, cut, tear in pieces those hapless victims; set your sacrificing vessel on the fire, and throw into it their trembling limbs, yet filled with life and blood. As for us, my dear friends, (*addressing the other Demi-Chorus,*) betray us not, prepare the bark, and let us, by sailing immediately from this fatal den, save ourselves.

SECOND HALF CHORUS.

Let us fly this inhuman master who devours the flesh of his guests: let us renounce his abominable sacrifices: let us ever regard as execrable whoever massacres the suppliant guest whom chance has conducted to his roof. How much worse then is he who pitilessly mangles them, and, who turning them on burning iron like victims, devours their smoking carcasses?

ACT the THIRD.

SCENE the FIRST.

ULYSSES and the CHORUS.

HEAVENS! what can I say? what can I do? what an execrable sight have my eyes been witness to! Can man be guilty of such enormity? or rather, is not this one of these fabulous prodigies, the recital of which, though incredible, yet makes us shudder with horror?

CHORUS.

What ails you Ulysses? has the hungry Cyclops made a meal of the bodies of any of your beloved companions?

ULYSSES.

I saw him take up two; and, looking at them with curious eyes, weigh them in his abominable hands. They pleased him, and heavens—

CHORUS.

Ah, hapless strangers! what horrors has he not been guilty of!

Ulysses relates, “That he and his companions having entered the cavern, Polyphemus began to blow up the fire, consisting of more entire trees than three waggons would well carry; near which he stretched himself out on the ground, which was covered with the leaves: that he then filled his immense * bottle with the milk himself had drawn from his flocks; and swallowed a goblet full of an unmeasurable size: that he placed on the fire his iron pot: that he made ready his polished spits, not indeed of steel, but of a wood which could bear the † flame; and in short he prepared all his kitchen utensils: that this infernal cook, approaching his companions, deliberately selected two of them, whom he killed, by plunging one of them into the boiling chaldron, and by dashing the other, whom he held by the feet, against the craggy point of a rock. His blood spirted about, and was mixed with his brains: then cutting his flesh off with a terrible knife, part he broiled on the fire, and threw the rest into the chaldron.”

I blush at recounting these hideous paintings, which by being so extravagant, degenerate into old women's tales: but having determined, contrary to my better judgment, to translate the Cyclops, I could not omit any part of it, however shocking, which might enable the reader to conceive justly this singular species of the drama, the gigantick paintings of which were calculated to strike forcibly, I had almost said rudely, the hearts of the common people, whose emotions were not so easily excited by delicate raillery, and a natural display of the passions.

Ulysses adds, that this horrid spectacle made him shed a torrent of tears, which he hoped would soften the barbarous monster, while his surviving companions fled, like timorous birds, into every corner of the cavern: that seeing Polyphemus filled with human flesh, and stretched upon the ground, an expedient struck him,

* Enripides says it contained 80 gallons. † This wood in the original is called *radox* and is supposed to be a species of thorn.

which

which seemed as if inspired by heaven: this was to offer the monster some exquisite wine. "Son of Neptune, said he, taste this fruit of Greece, the precious gifts of Bacchus. This the Cyclops finished in one gulph. He admires its flavour, and, with hands raised to heaven, thanks me, not without laughter, for a present so uncommon, and so suiting the excellent repast he had just made." Ulysses, seeing him in so good a humour, offers him another draught, that he might revenge himself on him while intoxicated. Polyphemus begins to sing, and Ulysses keeps plying him with wine. "Alas! cries he, the Cyclops makes his cave resound with know not what barbarous airs, while my frightened companions shed melancholy tears. I seize the happy moment and steal away without making any noise, to propose to you the means of our common safety. He is in our power: will you fly or not? By flying you escape a ferocious beast, an enemy to humanity, and may again behold Bacchus and his nymph attendants. Your father, who with Polyphemus applauds my design; but he wavers like a bird whose wings are limed: he is arrested by the smell of wine. As for you, whom youth renders more undaunted, save, save yourselves, and return to serve your beloved Bacchus, who differs so much from this inhuman master."

CHORUS.

Ah, dear Ulysses, why does not the dawn arise that shall see us fly from this inhospitable tyrant? Alas! it is now an age since we have ceased to enjoy our darling festivals: but how can we escape?

Ulysses, having thus revived their curiosity for Bacchus, and animated them with hatred against the Cyclops, discovers to them the stratagem he had devised for their safety. Polyphemus, being merry with what he had drank, proposes to visit his brother Cyclops, in order to communicate to them part of his good fortune. Ulysses undertakes to dissuade him from this, by shewing him that he ought to keep for his own use the wine he had landed. When he is asleep, the Grecian prince means to take the trunk of an olive tree which lies in the cavern, and sharpening its point with his sword, will harden it in the fire; where being rendered burning hot, he will plunge it into the eye of the Cyclops, and rapidly twist it out. This anticipates the catastrophe, which Euripides frequently practises.

This stratagem appears so wonderful to the Chorus, that they bound like fools with joy. Ulysses, on his part, promises, if his

enterprise succeeds, that he will conduct both Silenus and them on board his ship, and transport them far from this wicked shore. Having thus made them anxious for the completion of his project, he returns into the cave to seek for his companions, without whom he cannot think of flying; and chuses rather to run the risk of perishing cruelly than of basely deserting them.

CHORUS, *divided into two companies.*

The Satyrs contend among themselves for the honour of putting out the eye of the Cyclops. One of them overhears a noise in the cave, and orders the rest to listen. They soon perceive that it is Polyphemus, who is singing idle airs, thoughtless of the destiny that awaits him. Another Satyr is of opinion, that they should also accompany him with their voices, and applaud his manner. In a word, the half Chorus sing a little ode in the taste of Anacreon, the burden of which is, That happy are they who partake of the sprightly diversions of Bacchus.

ACT the FOURTH.

SCENE the FIRST.

The CYCLOPS, SILENUS, ULYSSES, and the CHORUS.

IN this truly farcical scene, the Cyclops is introduced, probably leaping frantically about, and bellowing like a drunkard. I shall, however, give the reader an extract of as much of it as decency will permit me to translate. Euripides, and those who composed in the satyric drama, aimed at nothing more than merely to divert the populace, (theatrical entertainment being the universal madness,) and for that purpose were obliged to adopt the lowest images; yet it is easy to observe, that Euripides gave into this more against his judgment than the cynical Aristophanes. To this opinion the following infamous passage may be objected. Where am I? cries the stammering Polyphemus: then observing his attendant Satyrs, he strikes on his belly, which he compares to a bark richly laden, and piques himself on his gluttony: then declaring his resolution of partaking with his brother Cyclops of their vernal banquets, he commands Ulysses to bring him the skin of wine which was in the cave. The son of Laertes obeys, and retires.

SCENE.

THE CYCLOPS.

469

SCENE the SECOND.

The Satyrs, in consequence of their agreement with Ulysses, in the end of the preceding act, with the most extravagant encomiums, flatter the hideous Polyphemus, on account of his beauty, his air of grandeur, and the elegance of his whole person. They comically compare him to one of those charming nymphs who inhabit the grotto, almost in as few words, as I express them.

SCENE the THIRD.

ULYSSES, SATYRS, SILENUS, &c.

ULYSSES to the CYCLOPS.

Deign to hear me, my Lord, since I am better acquainted than any one else with the God Bacchus, whose delicious liquor I have made you taste.

CYCLOPS, *bursting into a fit of laughter.*

Bacchus a God, and what kind of God may he be?

ULYSSES.

Mock him not: he is the most powerful of all those Gods who preside over the pleasures of society.

Polyphemus replies, by an impious jest, which does not so much shew the impiety of polytheism, as it discovers the constant contempt which the Athenians entertained for their poetic fables, as has already been proved.

ULYSSES.

Why reject that Deity? he sure does no injury to man.

POLYPHEMUS.

But tell us, why does that God chuse ridiculously to lodge in a skin of wine?

ULYSSES.

He is the very best little good humoured God that one can converse with: put on what airs you will, he is always gay and benevolent.

CY-

THE CYCLOPS.

CYCLOPS.

But, answer me; is it decent for a Deity to reside in a skin?

ULYSSES.

Truly you have much cause to be offended. If the host please you, of what importance is his abode?

CYCLOPS.

Thou art in the right; yet I cannot away with his skins, although I hugely admire the liquor they contain.

ULYSSES.

Then take my advice, good Polyphemus; even stay where you are, drink your fill, and continue merry.

CYCLOPS.

Why not impart my happiness to my brethren?

ULYSSES.

Why not! see them not, see them not. While you are singly happy you'll have more honour shown you, which is an exclusive privilege.

CYCLOPS.

But if I communicate my happiness I shall be more useful.

ULYSSES.

Oh, my Lord, that is all out of fashion now: goods imported are subject to dispute. Don't you know that Comus loves quarrels and discord?

CYCLOPS.

What care I! should I get drunk, what would follow? Is there a mortal so intrepid as to dare to attack me?

ULYSSES.

The proverb says, That drunkard should keep within.

CYCLOPS.

Proverb for proverb, That drunkard is a fool who loves not Comus and his companions.

ULYSSES.

Your proverb is foolish, but mine is wise.

CY-

THE CYCLOPS.

471

CYCLOPS.

Enough! Let us now take other counsel, what sayst, thou Silenus, should I go or stay?

Polyphemus, like a true master enslaved to his slave, always consults Silenus, who had gained an ascendant by being necessary.

SILENUS.

Stay, I advise you. What occasion have you for parasites?

CYCLOPS.

The flow'ry turf on which my brethren repose, invites me, I own, to quit this rocky cave.

SILENUS.

Oh, is it not charming to drink in the heat of the sun? Trust me, stretch yourself out on the ground, and drink your belly full.

CYCLOPS, to Silenus.

Then here I lie: but why do you plant the goblet behind me?

SILENUS.

I am afraid they should steal it from you.

CYCLOPS.

I understand: you chuse to drink of it in secret; set it down in my sight. (To Ulysses) So! now stranger, tell me your name..

ULYSSES.

My name is No Man. But what recompense will you give me for all this good wine?

CYCLOPS.

Why, friend, I'll snap you up last.

ULYSSES.

Excellent consolation for a guest!

CYCLOPS, to Silenus.

Hola Silenus! what are you about there? I doubt you swill, you rogue, &c.

Here:

Here follows some theatric tricks, which, though farcical, are however not intirely to be contemned. The scene very much resembles that in the Italian theatre, where Scaramouch subtly filches wine from Pierrot. Silenus, in quality of master-taster to the Cyclops, endeavours to swallow five or six good draughts, sometimes in secret, sometimes under pretence of making trial of the wine, sometimes in hopes of his master's crowning himself, like a drunkard, with a garland of roses, and sometimes while he instructed him to drink with grace, like a man of fashion; till Polyphemus, being quite tired with with these mummeries, commands Ulysses to be his cup-bearer.

CYCLOPS.

Stranger, take the skin, and be my Ganymede.

ULYSSES.

That's well, my hand is accustomed to wine.

CYCLOPS.

Pour away.

ULYSSES.

Here! only be you silent.

CYCLOPS.

That's no easy matter for a toper.

ULYSSES, *still pouring.*

Drink it all up. A jolly drinker quaffs till he loses both his breath and his liquor.

CYCLOPS.

Gods! how wisdom sparkles in that juice!

In a short while Polyphemus's senses begin to grow disordered. He imagines himself swimming on the ocean: he sees heaven and earth confounded together: he beholds Jupiter on his throne, surrounded by the celestial synod. In a word, the monster, yielding at last to the power of intoxication, like Effeminacy in the Lutrin,

Sighs, it tches his limbs, shuts his eyes, and snores loud.

SCENE

SCENE the FOURTH.

ULYSSES and the CHORUS.

Ulysses takes advantage of the sleep in which the Cyclops and Silenus are plunged, to exhort the Satyrs to second his endeavours with courage. The Chorus reply, "Do not fear us: we have hearts of rock and diamond; but "go in and see, if the brand is ready, "before our father awakes."

ULYSSES, *going.*

Vulcan, great God of Ætna, assist me to burn out the eye of this perfidious monster, and deliver me from this imminent danger; and thou, bland sleep, son of night, shed thy poppies on this ferocious giant! Permit not, ye Gods, Ulysses and his companions, after so many exploits, to become a prey to a barbarian who neither regards you nor man. Otherwise mortals must deem fortune a Goddess whose power surpasses yours.

SCENE the FIFTH.

CHORUS, *alone.*

While they expect Ulysses, the Chorus finish the act with a short song of anticipated triumph, excited by hopes of seeing the Cyclops soon blinded, of flying with the king of Ithaca, and of again finding Bacchus with his ivy garlands.

ACT the FIFTH.

SCENE the FIRST.

ULYSSES and the SATYRS.

SILENCE, my dear Satyrs; for God's sake cough not, stir not, breathe not, lest he should awake and disappoint our project.

SATYRS.

Peace, let us hold in our breath. What now?

ULYSSES.

All is ready, the sharpened brand burns. Come, help me to carry it.

SATYRS.

The Satyrs look at, and mutually intreat each other to lend a hand to the work. They thus discover their dastardly disposition. At first ready to undertake all, they now want courage. When desired to execute, some of them excuse themselves on account of weakness, and others on account of a sudden cramp, while the rest complain of an instant blindness; and all of them in short shuffle off their engagement.

ULYSSES.

Ah dastards!

CHORUS.

It must be owned, I commiserate my shoulders, and prudence prevails. Would you have us get our teeth dashed down our throat, and our limbs beat to a jelly? But be not troubled. We know one of those wonderful songs of Orpheus which will even charm the brand, make it come off itself, pierce the skull of the Cyclops, and burn out his brain.

ULYSSES.

I am not surpris'd at your cowardice. I know you of old, and now know you thoroughly. Let us do it ourselves. All I ask of you is, with your voices and gestures to animate my companions. (*He retires.*)

This being the only task impos'd on them, they promise to perform it to a miracle. Soon after, Ulysses and his companions appear, bearing along a prodigious trunk burning at one end.

SCENE the SECOND.

ULYSSES, his COMPANIONS, CHORUS.

Courage, my boys, dispatch, away with it, in with it, turn it round, burn him. Excellent! now take care of yourselves.

SCENE the THIRD.

ULYSSES, and his Companions return.

CHORUS.

THE CYCLOPS awakes blinded, and bellows.

Ah, wretch! they have burnt out my eye.

CHORUS.

CHORUS, *Aside.*

Glorious music! now sing, thou monster.

CYCLOPS.

What pain! what outrage! (*To Ulysses and his companions*) ye shall not, however, escape from my cave, contemptible crew! I will place myself at the entry, and you must pass under this hand. (*He goes to the entry groping his way.*)

THE CHORUS, *to the Cyclops, with affected grief.*

Alas! what ails you? why these doleful cries?

CYCLOPS.

I am undone.

CHORUS.

Heavens, how you are disfigured!

CYCLOPS.

And how wretched!

CHORUS.

Did you, when intoxicated, tumble into the cauldron? who has so cruelly abused you?

CYCLOPS.

No man.

CHORUS.

What, no man! Of whom then do you complain?

CYCLOPS.

Of no man.

CHORUS.

You then do wrong to lament, and have still the use of your eye.

CYCLOPS.

Scoundrels, may you soon see no better than I see.

THE CYCLOPS.

CHORUS.

This is a downright riddle to us. How could what does not exist do you harm?

CYCLOPS.

Ye mock me, wretches! tell me where lurks he?

CHORUS.

Who?

CYCLOPS.

No man.

CHORUS.

No where?

CYCLOPS.

The stranger, I mean! now do you understand me? where is that villain who destroyed me. Fatal gift! to offer me wine and betray me. Ah, perfidious Bacchus! But speak, ye rogues! have they got off, or lurk they still in my cave?

CHORUS.

They are all clung together in thy cave, and dare not fetch their breath.

CYCLOPS.

Where? where?

CHORUS.

To the right.

CYCLOPS.

Where?

CHORUS.

Near that craggy point. Now you have it.

CYCLOPS, *dashing himself against it.*

Misfortune on misfortune; I have dashed my head against the rock.

CHO-

THE CYCLOPS.

477

CHORUS.

There they fly.

CYCLOPS.

Then were they not here, as ye said.

CHORUS.

We said not here.

CYCLOPS.

Where are they then?

CHORUS.

They turn round you to the left.

CYCLOPS.

Ah villains, villains, they insult me, mock me in my calamity!

CHORUS.

No, we speak seriously. The stranger stands before you.

CYCLOPS.

Ah, traitor, where art thou?

SCENE the FOURTH.

To them ULYSSES.

Here I am, far enough from you. Know Ulysses.

CYCLOPS.

Ulysses! whence that change of name?

ULYSSES.

You were imposed on. I am the true Ulysses. Thou wert destined to be punished by me for thy perfidy. In vain should I have gloried in the destruction of Troy, if my hands had not avenged on thee the inhuman murder of my companions.

The CYCLOPS astonished.

Ah me, the * oracle is accomplished. I now with horror re-

* Telemus Eurymedes, quem nulla fefellerat ales,
Terribilem Polyphemon adit, lumenque quod unum
Fronte geris mediâ, rapiet tibi (dixit) Ulysses.

Ovid Met. l. 13.

cal its fatal prediction. It foretold that thou shouldst put out my eye by a cruel stratagem, on thy return from Ilium: but tremble in thy turn. The same oracle avenges me. Thou art doomed long to wander on the waves.

ULYSSES.

I laugh at thy predictions, thou who art blind, while I see. Adieu, I fly to the shore. I mount my ship. I cut the sea of Sicily. I return to my kingdom.

CYCLOPS

Thou shalt not escape so. See this rock which I tear off. It shall crush thee and all thy companions. I can yet ascend the summit, blind as I am.

CHORUS.

Come away, come away, let us follow Ulysses, and henceforth pay our homage to Bacchus.

FINIS.



THE CYCLOPEDIA

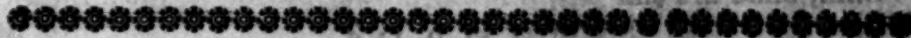
in last edition. It should be that should be put out in
my chief strength on my return from Spain but terrible
it was. The same circle surrounds me. They are doomed
to suffer on the water.

LETTERS

I hope to say something about the state of the
of the world. I am in the state of the world. I am in the state of the world.

CYCLOPEDIA

They have not been in the state of the world. I am in the state of the world. I am in the state of the world.



Some way, some way, let us follow the path of the world. I am in the state of the world. I am in the state of the world.

Advertisement.

THE candid reader is desired to amend the several errors
of the press, in the preface and the three first discourses :
particularly in the preface, page 25, instead of *wiser*, to read
wine.



GREEK THEATRE

Advertisement



THE Greek Theatre, situated in the heart of the city, is a place of great interest and beauty. It is a place where the most famous actors of the world have performed. The theatre is a place of great interest and beauty. It is a place where the most famous actors of the world have performed.

